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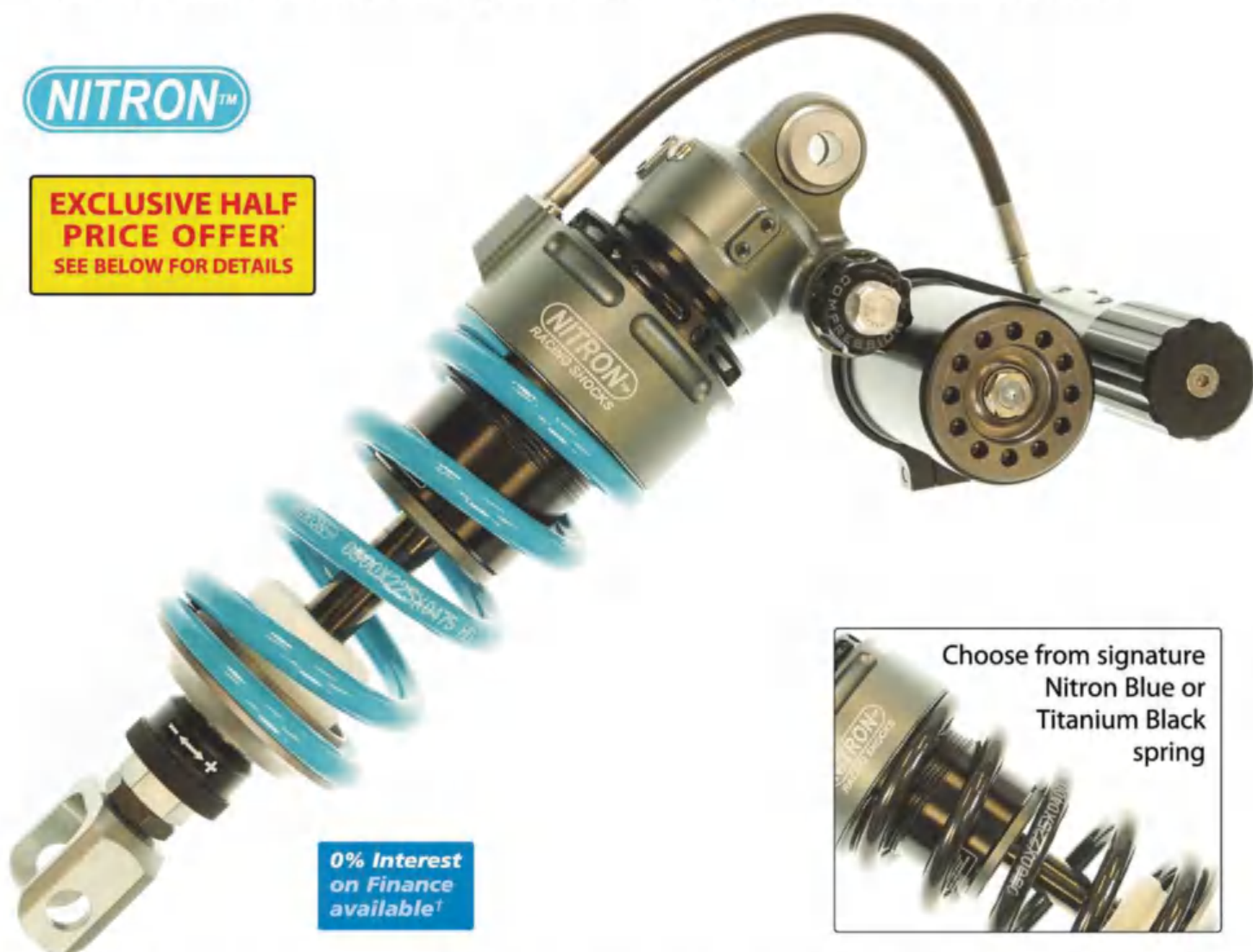


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Feeling Robbed

I love MotoGP. I have something approaching a man crush for Valentino Rossi. I have nothing but massive admiration for Marc Marquez and I have genuine respect for Jorge Lorenzo's achievements, but after the events of the Malaysian MotoGP I'll be watching the last race at Valencia in a different light.

It's fair to say that of the chief protagonists at the Malaysian MotoGP, only Dani Pedrosa emerged with any credit. What was due to be a battle royale turned into something way more sinister – and that act started as soon as Valentino Rossi got on the offensive at the Thursday press conference.

Looking back, I bet Rossi wishes he kept his powder dry over what he perceived to be an anti-GOAT agenda by the outgoing world champion. Doing it in front of both Marquez and the world's media was a ballsy move, but was only ever going to end up with Marquez reacting back just when Rossi didn't want him to. So when Rossi passed Marquez in the opening laps of the GP it truly was game on.

That Lorenzo was a second or so up the road at the shit/fan interface was telling. As best as he could, Lorenzo ducked the flack from the press conference. Though he was stung by Rossi robbing him a front row start, and having to be pushed ignominiously out of parc ferme, Lorenzo did well by keeping his mouth shut off track and by concentrating on chasing Pedrosa down. That diplomacy wasn't to last.

If you poke a stick in someone's face for too long you will get a reaction. And that's exactly what happened. Marquez, after claiming he wouldn't get involved in a title fight, rolled his sleeves up and got stuck into Rossi – with venom, too. Rossi, agog at some of the moves Marquez was making, then reacted in an unfortunately unstatesman-like manner. My take on it was that was the wrong reaction, but I can see why he did it and I'd probably do the same. My take also goes on to say that Marquez could have avoided the contact, too – although for the sake of any greater injury it was probably for the best that one of them went down. Commentators, journalists, Dorna, the FIM and then Lorenzo then waded in to cover themselves in something not resembling glory.

The punishment was millions of fans not getting to see a truly epic finale, our respect for the world's best racers diminished and the spectacle of the organisers not knowing how to reprimand its biggest stars. Plus, we had to suffer social media at its worst, any hope of reasoned debate lost amid the blinkered hatred and homophobic memes. And all on a weekend where we should have been celebrating the life of one of our heroes – Marco Simoncelli.

I'll still watch the Valencia race, but being denied what would have been the ultimate ending will temper the spectacle. Maybe it's time to find a new hero. Any suggestions? Have a great month.

Rootsy



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Upfront

PLANET FAST BIKES - NEW METAL, NEWS & REVIEWS

UK No Shows

What with a new Yamaha YZF-R1S not coming to the UK and no Aprilia RSV4 RR on our shores, we ponder what else are we missing out on?

We were rather shocked to learn that Yamaha is making a lower spec version of the R1 for the American market. What with that and Aprilia not bringing in the standard version of the RSV4 into the UK, is there the danger of the world becoming more diverse, with more models being made to suit the pockets and passions of different markets?

The American R1, known as the R1S, uses less exotic materials in its manufacture and goes for electronics-lite in order to bring the cost down. So the S gets steel con-rods instead of the 'standard' bike's titanium, alloy wheels instead of magnesium and steel exhaust headers, again, instead of titanium. The quickshifter is also prised off, though the rest of the electronics package remains intact. In all, the changes in materials adds about five kilos to the package – in turn reducing the price of the bike by 10 per cent. Yamaha has said that the S has been made specifically to meet the demands of the American rider (what those are remains to be seen, though it's being marketed as 'An R1 For Everyone!'), but clearly the price was putting off some potential buyers over the pond – though sales are buoyant in the UK and the biggest European markets in

its full-spec trim.

Aprilia's decision not to export the stock RSV4 RR to the UK was made to make the RF the undiluted offer – although a few dealers in the UK have stock of the RR. Wheels in Peterborough have a few RRs for sale, and are offering the machine at a discount – £13,995 as opposed to what would have been the rrp of £14,995. The three grand differential between the RR and the RF goes largely in the bike's suspension and braking package, and given that many RFs won't see a track it seems an odd miss to not bring the lower spec bike in, especially when both Tuono variants came into the country.

Manufacturers do make bikes for specific markets that we don't ever see. The Yamaha YZF-R3 was born from the R-25, and we never saw that original bike. Places like Indonesia (where the bike was built) and Turkey were where the bike was sold, with the plan that the bike was never to go near established markets in the West. Want a funky little Kawasaki 125? Go for the new Z125 that's available in Japan – there's also a Pro version of it. In Japan there's also a very smart looking Ninja 400 available, a cut down version of the ER-6f that was made for the home market as well as Canada and New Zealand.



Access denied! Yamaha YZF-R1S, KTM RC200, Kawasaki Z125, Honda VTR250, Aprilia RR



Honda offers the CBR400R and CB400F to various parts of the world and there's an enticing VTR250. Suzuki has the Gixxer – a 155cc bike – for sale in Asia, as well as a race series to go alongside it in India. KTM's Duke 200 wasn't meant for Europe, but rather the developing world – especially India where the Austrian firm has also released an RC200.

In ye olden days, this did cause problems with bikes finding their way over to the UK in all sorts of different guises. Grey imports of

bikes unavailable, or available in higher/lower spec, would be shipped over and sold on – with the ensuing mess over warranties and parts being many a rider's nightmare. This situation developing with the Yamaha YZF-R1S and the Aprilia RSV4 RR is much less likely to cause grief given the numbers involved and the more depressed pricing in today's market, but there's still a chance that these machines will find their way and be sold on to unsuspecting riders.

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THE GRID OF NEWS

Who's qualified where in this month's news race?

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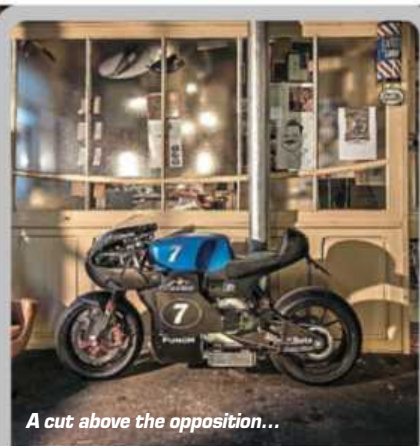
FUNKY 500

■ While we still wait for changes to CBRs of a larger capacity, the smaller bikes have been revised in an attempt by Honda to appeal further to A2 buyers in Europe – as well as more experienced bikers in the developing world. The CBR500R has been given a snazzy redesign to give the machine a sportier look, while subtle changes elsewhere make the machine a more attractive proposition to fend off its rivals from Japan and Europe. Preload adjustability makes its debut on the front fork, the fuel tank has been made larger and the brake levers are now adjustable. The shorter exhaust offers a slightly different sound and, er, there's a new key.

SAVING THE PLANET WITH A NEW KWAK ZZR1400

■ Kawasaki is going full steam ahead in converting its fleet to Euro 4 compliance, so as well as the new ZX-10R making the grade (see overleaf), a new additional catalyser ensures that the big ZZR1400 breathes cleaner in 2016. In turn, this implies that we're not going to see anything new from the heavyweight Ninja for at least two years. How Kawasaki has managed to do this and keep the same 200PS headline power figure is unclear, but FI and ECU changes are likely to be behind this particular trick. The ZZR1400 also gets a new dash, while the Performance Sport version gets a set of M50 Brembo brake calipers – the same featured on the new ZX-10R – as well as steel braided lines, while the shock is an Öhlins TTX39 unit.

A green machine...



A cut above the opposition...

ELECTRIC DREAMS

■ Without doubt the best thing to emerge from Belgium over the last few years is the Sarolea SP7 TT Zero electric race bike. Beautifully styled and respectably powered, it had no chance against the million pound Mugens ridden by John McGuinness and Bruce Anstey – but these bikes are real beauties. Already homologated for use on the Isle of Man's roads, the limited production run of the Sarolea Manx 7 will be offered to the public next year – so far the pertinent details, such as price and power are scant. Watch this space...

BETTER THE DEVIL YOU KNOW

■ Pirelli is upping the ante with a new Diablo Rosso tyre joining the fray. The Diablo III is claimed to increase handling, grip and longevity – and it will also offer to iron your shirts for you, too. With a new twin-compound rear, fresh profiles and a new tread pattern, it's a big overhaul.



EICMA INFO

■ With the Italian bike extravaganza that is the Eicma show just around the corner, and the ensuing raft of news that will inevitably follow it, we thought it best to let you know that we'll be giving the inside on all the new important bike launches – well, the ones that matter to us – on the t'internet. Tune in to the website at www.fastbikesmag.com and our massive Facebook page for all the news as and when it happens from the huge Milanese show.

CANNONBALL BIKE RUN

■ You'll read all about Rootsy's Cannonball Bike Run capers in the forthcoming issues of Fast Bikes, but it's our sad duty to report that during this year's event there was a serious accident in which former Dakar Rally rider Colin Askey was killed and Roy Fradley seriously injured while riding in Slovenia. Both terrific company on the trip, we offer our heartfelt condolences to Colin's family and hope that Roy has a full and speedy recovery – get well soon, fella.

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2016 Kawasaki ZX-10R

TECH DATA



Kawasaki ZX-10R

ENGINE	Type	998cc, I/c 16v, DOHC, inline four
	Bore x Stroke	76.0 x 55.0mm
	Compression	13.0:1
	Fuelling	EFI, 47mm throttle bodies
	Claimed Power	197bhp @ 13,00rpm
	Claimed Torque	113.5Nm @ 11,500rpm
ELECTRONICS	RBW/Riding Modes	Yes/Three
	Traction Control	Yes, 5 levels
	ABS	Yes
	Quickshifter	Yes
	Wheelie Control	Yes
CHASSIS	Launch Control	Yes
	Frame	Aluminium twin spar
	F Suspension	43mm Showa BFFF, fully adj.
	R Suspension	Showa BFRC lite shock, fully adj.
	Front Brakes	M50 Brembo calipers, 330mm discs
DIMENSIONS	Rear Brakes	Single piston caliper, 22mm disc
	Wheelbase	1,440mm
	Rake/Trail	25 degrees/107mm
	Seat Height	835mm
	Kerb Weight	206kg
PRICE	Fuel Capacity	17 litre
	Price	TBA
	From	Kawasaki UK www.kawasaki.co.uk

With only having about three minutes to magic up our story on the 2016 Kawasaki ZX-10R, and before the razzmatazz of its Barcelona unveiling, we thought it best to give you lovely people a more thorough run down on all the best bits of the new bike. Having teased us into thinking that the new Zed would only be a mild revision – this notion aided by the near identical façade of the new bike – the truth is far different. This is a massive overhaul based on WSB feedback and featuring parts and ancillaries that we could only dream about a few years ago. The Barcelona product launch (the riding launch won't happen until January) offered up the project leader to quiz, as well as key members of the world championship winning WSB team that has been integral to the new bike's development.

SO WHAT'S NEW THEN?

Got A New Motor?

"Inertia caused us problems, problems we weren't able to get round by changing set-up," said Tom Sykes on his pre-2016 ZX-10R race bike. Given that this inertia came from the crank, an item that WSB rules said had to be stock, the onus was on Kawasaki to make a new crank

with less inertia – and that's exactly what's been achieved. The new, lighter crankshaft with reduced crank web sizes generates 20 per cent less inertia, meaning that Tom, Jonathan and any other lucky sod with one on order can benefit from quicker acceleration and easier direction changing. The balancer shaft has also shed weight. To match this bottom end change, the top end sees a host of changes, with new shaped pistons (shorter, with revised crowns and five grams lighter), straighter machining on the exhaust ports, 1mm larger exhaust valves, new cam profiles (offering changed overlap), deeper welled park plugs and a reshaped combustion chamber. The crank cases have also changed, the bike gets a larger airbox (giving a 25 per cent volume increase) and the internal ratios of the gearbox are new. Even the clutch is new, with over 100 grams shaved off its weight. Even things like oil cooler pipe routing has changed – this as a direct result of findings from the race team. Clever stuff.

Euro 4 – New Bikes 0

The ZX-10R is the first superbike to meet the new Euro 4 emissions legislation. This is an extremely restrictive regulation that is nearly twice as tough on carbon monoxide emissions (as well as



LEFT TO RIGHT: Your thumb gets no rest, a new crank cuts inertia significantly, the shock is all new, while the racekit should turn it into a missile...

dropping hydrocarbon and NOx limits significantly). Kawasaki's method isn't the most elegant, adding a third catalyser, but if the bike can make 197bhp with this restriction in place you can just imagine what'll happen when you add a full system or de-cat the beast. New bikes made after 1st January 2016 will have to adhere to Euro 4 rules, while existing machines will need to be compliant a year later. If, as expected, most manufacturers go down the multiple-cat route (cheap and effective), expect a significant drop in claimed power – anything up to 10bhp – and an upping of weight.

Exhausting Tests

The biggest visual change is the larger silencer for, er, silencing. Behind the fairings, connector pipes join the middle headers for better engine response, the system gets a third catalyser to meet Euro 4, and the silencer itself is made from titanium alloy as opposed to stainless as before. The titanium used is roughly 50 per cent thinner than before, while allowing more heat cycles.

Zeroes And Ones

Though massively impressed with Kawasaki's KTRC system, the Ninja warriors have gone a step further with the new bike's electronics suite, offering a five-axis Bosch IMU (Inertial Measurement Unit – it weighs just 40 grams) with a home brewed sixth axis embedded in the ECU. Yaw, pitch, roll? The IMU knows exactly what the bike is doing at any point in time – well, within 5 milliseconds. On the face of it, there are five modes, but with modes within modes the effective range is an 11-stage TC system – S-KTRC. This system is now predictive to offer electronic aid before crisis

A Kawasaki employee says...

Freshly crowned world champion, Jonathan Rea, was on hand to opine about the new bike. He's genuinely excited about it as race package, but as standard it also raised a few eyebrows, "The first time I rode it I was ready to make my excuses about not riding on the road, it being on cold road tyres, but that soon all disappeared. I had a ride on the 2015 bike on a parade lap at the TT to compare the two bikes, and I immediately noticed the riding position – it felt more natural. I love the forks and brakes, they look like they've come straight off my race bike. And like Tom was saying, the issues about changing direction seem to have been addressed by the new crank. I've never experienced electronics on a road bike (did you work for Honda before? – Ed) and the traction control and ABS made it hard to get it out of shape. All riders ride to a comfort zone, but straight off I wanted tyre warmer and race rubber to see how fast I could ride it." Not a bad salesman, is he...

point has even been reached. Any intervention is made through ignition and air intake control. Via the IMU it can factor in corner camber, gradients and different tyre profiles. Anti wheelie is still included, there's a new three mode launch control system (KLCM) and engine braking control (KEBC) is a new feature. You get three power modes and Kawasaki offers a CAN coupler for easy access for datalogging hook-up.

Quick. Shift Her

Rejoice, for the ZX-10R will be equipped with a new quickshifter (KQS), although the downshift function is only available when the kit ECU is installed.

Style Trial

Project manager Yoshimoto Matsuda issued a radical declaration at the start, "I made an announcement to the company that there would be no cosmetic changes to the new ZX-10R, all the changes will be to improve the dynamics." That's some statement where a bike is often sold on its looks, but Matsuda-san stuck to his guns, and the only changes made to the look of the bike were made to improve how fast the ZX-10R can go. Aerodynamics played a role in the changes to the cowl and screen, the tank's shape has changed slightly to accommodate a rider better while the rear seat now has a bigger volume.

Factory Chassis

Again, input from the KRT WSB squad proved to be invaluable during development. Pere Riba, former Kawasaki factory rider and now Jonathan Rea's crew chief said, "This is a bike that has to be easy to ride, you cannot fight it. So by using riders at the limit of the bike we can work to

make the bike easier to ride on the road." The ability to play with geometry on the racetrack led directly to revisions with the bike. The headstock is now 7.5mm closer to the rider, the aim being to put more weight over the front. In the racekit, offset collars allow the steering stem to be adjusted + /-4mm from standard. The racekit also has reversible offset collars for the swingarm pivot position. The 15.8mm longer swingarm again pushes weight over the front and has had its wall thicknesses changed to adjust torsional rigidity. These changes lead to a 1,440mm wheelbase and a centre of gravity that's slightly higher than before. Yoshimoto Matsuda said, "To go fast you have to make a bike easy to ride. Our target was to make the bike 1.5 seconds quicker than any of its rivals round our track at Autopolis. One rider was 2.1 seconds quicker, the other 1.1."

King Of Springs

The big talking point at the Barcelona unveiling was the use of Showa's new 43mm Balance Free front fork. This is a unit that the Japanese suspension firm has developed specifically with Kawasaki, so don't expect it on any other bike soon. Those red protrusions are pressurised nitrogen gas canisters, and this allows the damping chamber and valve not to be placed within the fork – making it effectively a remote system (like you get on rear shocks). The damping forces are generated outside of the main

tube. The whole surface of the main fork piston can now push the oil in the system. This unit also enables compression and rebound damping to work independently of each other as the hydraulic circuit doesn't allow an imbalance of pressure and thus concentrates all damping forces on either the compression or rebound system. Adjustment is therefore made on the bottom of the fork leg, with preload adjusted at the top of each tube. Benefits in braking stability, feel and comfort are said to be the reasons for the shift – plus they're impossibly cool. The rear uses Showa's new Balance Free Rear Cushion shock, which operates according to the same principles as the front where the damping forces are generated in an external chamber. To top it off, linkage ratios have also changed.

Thems The Brakes

Kawasaki has splurged at the Brembo shop, offering the best off-the-shelf calipers in the Italian firm's range. The M50s with 330mm discs (they were 310mm pistons discs) will be mated to a radial master cylinder. Braided hoses are also going to be standard. A Bosch ABS system is added and incorporated into the KIBS system.

Wheels

Though the ZX-10R's wheels are cast aluminium, the back wheel is actually lighter than the magnesium wheel used on the R1. Not super pretty, but no doubt effective.

2016 KAWASAKI ZX-10R: THE RIVALS

Yamaha YZF-R1

With two options to go for (the standard or the electronically suspended MI), Yamaha seemingly has all bases covered. Engine power is a little on the light side as standard, but the electronics suite is a huge ally on track.

- + SLIDE CONTROL, THE M'S SUSPENSION, FREE TRACKDAY!
- ENGINE POWER, NO DOWNBLIPPER, LOOKS

BMW S 1000 RR

Electronic suspension, huge power and gadgets galore make the RR the bike they're all gunning for. If only they'd make another HP4 version to offer deft control at silly lean angles. As is, it's the same story for the Beemer – brilliant until the very edge.

- + MASSIVE POWER, TOYS GALORE, PRICE
- SAMEY LOOKS, LACKS CHARACTER, THAT'S IT

Aprilia RSV4 RF

An utterly sublime machine that somehow manages to justify its more than significant price tag. The extra lump of power found finally completes the jigsaw making it the best in breed. It doesn't need trick suspension as the analogue stuff is sublime.

- + CHASSIS, SUSPENSION, ENGINE, BRAKES...
- PRICE, NO STANDARD MODEL

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Leftfield

RIDING THE LESS SPORTING WAIFS AND STRAYS

WORDS BY: CHRIS MOSS

PICTURES BY: DOM ROMNEY

Aprilia Caponord 1200 Rally

After checking out what the Aprilia Caponord 1200 Rally can do, it's clear its Italian creators have decided to go about GS-beating in its own way. The result? It's up there, definitely worth a look, but has just a little more to do to match the super-established German class leader.

In fairness it's just some minor shortcomings that keep its score a bit short, and my time on it around some of the Midlands' finest swervery left me grinning readily – fully enough to want to stay aboard for way longer. So let's be upbeat and focus on the best bits first.

First off, and well worthy of a shout of praise is the effortless way you can chuck it about. OK, ideally you need to be a bit longer-legged than I am to manage to get on the bugger and then plant both plates firmly on terra-firma. But once in place on the tall, but broad and plush seat, right from wheel revolution number one the Caponord has a pushbike-like response to it. Talk about being light on its feet, it doesn't really feel as though it's touching the road at all. Steering has a very quick feel to it. Just a minor push on its wide bars gets an instant reaction from the front wheel, with equally prompt obedience from everything attached to it. You wanna turn and over head that way? Just think that, and you're already on your path of choice. Ignore the bike's imposing size and less than racy specs, this is one agile bit of kit.

Everything from town tootling to backroad blasting can be directed by the lightest touch. Even if you're weedy enough to be challenged by the weight of the Aprilia's key, you'll still be able to boss this beast about. Gym membership is not a prerequisite.

Comments on the kit that keeps the big Italian adventure bike cushioned from the rigours of the road are a little less complementary. Both the forks and rear shock generally do a very good job of keeping the Metzgers sticking, and maintaining a decent level of comfort for the pilot. They're also electronically tunable via a dash-mounted button. But the adjustment range from 1 to 4 to cope with extra weight and pace isn't quite

as broad as I'd have expected. All settings are a bit on the stiff side, and blatting down a particularly knackered road in the shire of Buckingham did have the Aprilia dancing about a bit more than preferred. The Auto semi-active setting that Beej was on about before I got to try the Caponord wasn't the magical thing I'd anticipated either. He said the setting would have the bike sense what it was running over perfectly and get on with the job of dealing with it. I didn't think it had that much wow-factor. Don't get me wrong, the suspenders are very good, and they do respond to button pressing, even if not quite over the wide range I'd hoped. And given you have to stop the bloody bike to do any of the tuning defeats the object really. The Bee-Em boys haven't let the GS leave the factory with that sort of shortcoming, nor have the tech chiefs at Ducati or KTM.

Anyway, moaning over and done with, the motor has plenty about it to bring joy. Typically healthy bottom end and midrange makes the 1200 Rally all the more useful and usable. But it's the rush as the revs run up higher that pleases most. Sporty little number is the Italian v-twin, and well up for a thrash to get your juices flowing fully. It's certainly got a fair bit more zing about it than its more sober German rival.

Mind you, to generate any real pulse-raising you need to slide the bar-mounted switch to choose either the 'Sport' or 'Touring' modes, which you can do on the fly. Both allow the peak power of 125 brake to get to the rear tyre. The Sport setting can be a bit lively in town, as the butterflies open a tad too sharpish, but along the lanes it's the one to pick. The 'Rain' setting on the other hand is positively fart-like, limiting the motor to 100bhp and making acceleration feel as though you've stood on the back brake. Don't bother with it, just use the throttle to limit upward pace.

Limiting wheelies is a secondary job the three-position anti-spin traction control arrangement does too well in its most intrusive setting. You'll get a little more chance to mono-wheel in its least

Highlights

Super flickable
Sporty motor
Trick suspension
Super stoppers
239kg
125bhp

➤ TRACK	7
<i>You could, but you'd feel daft</i>	
➤ FAST ROAD	9
<i>Easy speed</i>	
➤ HOOLIGAN	5
<i>Too civilised</i>	
➤ NEW RIDER	7
<i>Nicely mannered</i>	
➤ DESIRABILITY	8
<i>Sexier than a GS</i>	

Shockingly clever



Better than a GS lump!



authoritative position, but there'll be no top gear mingers as it can't be switched off. Nor can you alter settings on the move. Restricting the speedy Aprilia's pace deliberately is impressively straightforward enough thanks to the strength of the monoblock brake calipers, whether that's for an errant town cat or a tractor you've rushed up on at speed down a backlane. The switchable ABS doesn't cut in too early. When it does, it re-sets itself sharpish.

All in all, the Caponord Rally is impressive. It's dead easy to go fast on, steers beautifully, stops well, sounds the business and feels as though it wouldn't flinch at big mile trips. I wouldn't say it's quite as fully sorted as a GS, though with its new sportier steering geometry, 19-inch front wheel, crash bars, panniers, fog lights, cruise control and heated grips, it's getting closer. Mind you, perhaps the very best feature of the 1200 is that it's NOT a GS. Dunno about you, but just about every other bike I see on the road these days is one of bleedin' those Teutonic tanks...

The electronic suspension allows you to pile on the speed...



TECHNICAL Aprilia Caponord 1200 Rally

ENGINE	Type	1,197cc, LC, DOHC, 90° V-twin
	Bore x Stroke	106 x 67.8mm
	Compression	12.0:1
	Fuelling	Marelli EFI, twin injectors
	Claimed Power	125bhp @ 8,000rpm
	Claimed Torque	115Nm @ 6,800rpm

CHASSIS	Frame	Steel-tubed trellis, cast alloy
	Front Suspension	43mm Sachs fork, fully electronically adj.
	Rear Suspension	Sachs monoshock, fully electronically adj.
	Front Brakes	M432 Brembo monoblocks, 320mm discs
	Rear Brakes	Single piston Brembo caliper, 240mm disc

DIMENSIONS	Wheelbase	1,575mm
	Seat Height	840mm
	Dry Weight	239kg
	Fuel Capacity	24 litres

PRICE	Price	£14,135
	From	www.uk.aprilia.com

Verdict 8/10

A most credible, capable and well-equipped adventure bike. Sporty, comfy, and versatile, it's fit to take you to the shops – or round Europe and beyond.

- ✦ AGILITY, EXCITING MOTOR, NOT A GS
- ✦ SUSPENSION ADJUSTABILITY, UGLY END CAN

For Tarmac adventures, the Capo' is hard to beat...

ALTERNATIVE ADVENTURES ITALIAN TALL ROUNDER NOT YOUR THING? THERE ARE MORE OBVIOUS BIKES TO PLUMP FOR...**BMW R1200GS - £11,900**

The standard-setter. Very hard to fault the GS as it works well from mile one to mile thousand in a single day. A brilliant bike, more refined than ever, but just too common these days.

**DUCATI MULTISTRADA 1200S - £15,930**

Lots of power and lots of style. 160bhp equals speed, Ducati knowledge means it handles and stops well too. Trick semi-active suspension jacks up the price, but a lot is packed into it.

**HONDA VFR1200X CROSS TOURER - £12,400**

The Japanese alternative. Being a Honda means it works, pure and simple. The motor's power is spread well, though its handling feels weighty. Well built, but lacks character against the Euro bikes.





Moto Photo


From sandbags to handbags – this is the 2010 track battle that was won by the time this shot had been taken...

Honda's Fireblade won our SportsBike of the Year award in 2008, and kept it in 2009 with no improvements necessary. But what's this following menacingly in its wake in 2010? It's easy to forget the fuss that was made over the arrival of BMW's first attempt at a superbike, partly because history would soon reveal it for what it was. The S 1000 RR was an obvious improvement on what had gone before, but not the best that humanity could create. Some sandbags had been thrown out, but some remained, and Aprilia would soon realise that we want to read the last chapter before books aren't made any more, and send the improvement trajectory skywards once again.

But that's still in the future because here we are at lovely Llandow, just as it's started a-spittin', for a battle where we already know the outcome. Tasked with coming up with an image to show this simple but intangible narrative, we tried various combinations of one leading the other, side-by-side cornering and parallel wheelies, but my pick of the pics was this semi-plausible arrangement.

At the very least, the BMW shows no signs of struggling to keep up with the Honda, and I might even reckon it manages to give the impression that the S double-R is gaining ground in a menacing fashion and merely has to decide when it fancies mugging the 'Blade for its SBotY title crown. To this crazy human,

the front of the CBR appears to wear the face of a startled bunny who doesn't want to share its flesh with a fox, while the Rootsy/BMW combination manages to exude a look of target fixation where the only outcome option is success, mission accomplished, empty satisfaction achieved.

There's also a bonus point here for the respective bike-and-rider colour schemes looking almost like the inverse of each other. And the difference in their knee-to-ground gaps just helps the impression that as they head for the apex it's the BMW gaining on the Fireblade for the unavoidable conclusion. 

■ Nikon D2X, 180mm, 1/500th sec at f4, ISO 100.

WORDS AND PIC: JONNY GAWLER



WORDS: ROOTSY PICS: ANDREW KOHN

Brittens at Barber



A visit to the Barber circuit and museum in America is always worth it. Going when the renowned Vintage Festival is on is even better. But when the circuit and the event combine to bring you the largest gathering of Britten motorcycles you'll ever see then, well, you've just got to find a major organ to sell and go and make the pilgrimage.

That's what happened in October, when nine out of the ten Brittens ever produced were at the circuit to celebrate the life and work of their creator – John Britten. The maverick Kiwi died from cancer in 1995, but his legacy in mechanical form is truly stunning. Talks, track action and a whole lot of gawping filled the weekend, and two of the V1000 bikes got out and participated in the racing too.

Five bikes made it onto the Alabama track for a few flying laps, with former Britten racer Andrew Stroud unable to contain his enthusiasm with the Kiwi ending up pulling a big wheelie over the start line in celebration during his demonstration laps.

The fabled machines are now safely returned to their plinths around the world, but seeing as the circuit owner, George Barber, is such a big fan of both man and machine (there's one in his museum on site), it's worth checking in a few years whether another special reunion is on the cards...



The Barber museum is a special place at the best of times (it's on the edge of the track itself), but when so many Brittens are in the house it makes it a truly magical place.



New Zealander Andrew Stroud rode a Britten at Daytona in 1992, then won the Battle of the Twins races there in 1994 – and for the next three years. That means he had ample victory wheelie practice, as you can see here!



The Britten V1000 was built by John Britten and a few mates with the intention of defying convention – and winning races. The v-twin 999cc motor was fuel injected, used titanium valves, had an avant-garde sculpture as an exhaust and pumped out a more than respectable 160bhp. Then there was the bike itself, not using a frame as such, using a double wishbone suspension system on the front end and it covered in carbon fibre. It hit the scales at 138kg. Amazing.

Gearred Up

ALL THE LATEST, COOLEST & TRICKEST PERFORMANCE PRODUCTS

Brake Levers

One of the most common forms of modification we all make to our bikes is changing the levers. Whether it's because they look nicer, or you want them for track, or to improve feel, there are many reasons to swap out the stock items for something special. Technically, the stock fittings do exactly the same job as an aftermarket number, so why change? Well, use one of many of these on show here and you'll know right away.

A lever is something manufacturers don't invest hugely in unless the bike already comes with Gucci kit, but that's only usually on expensive steeds. A well thought out, brilliantly designed lever can increase feel when using the brakes, did you know that? You could also get folding ones too, or unbreakable ones, which can save you a few quid and keep you on the road in case you have a whoopsie. They can also allow for fine-tuned adjustment for your own personal pinky reach, too. And let's be honest, all of the ones here look cool, just another reason to splurge.

Then there are lever-guards,

which are getting more popular. You may think it's a bit race orientated, but as one of us found out, when an errant car's wing-mirror clouts one rather than the brake lever, you'll be thankful for them!

One word of caution, however. You'll see unbranded levers on eBay for less than £20 that look roughly like those here? These are most likely knocked up in China and you should avoid them like the proverbial plague. They may be just fine, but we've heard from several people over the years who have bought them as they seemed quite the bargain, only for something horrific to have gone wrong. Be that pins falling out (thus leaving someone with no brakes), or a poor design meaning that the brake is slightly on, overheating everything, which leads to them locking up while riding – we've heard it all.

We suggest buying decent kit for a good reason, and when it comes to anything braking related, that's probably something you really don't want to skimp on to save a few pence, wouldn't you agree?

ASV LEVERS

FROM £80.00

WWW.PERFORMANCEPARTS-LTD.COM



ASV makes wonderful levers that we've used time and again, especially the unbreakable versions with the five-year warranty. Made from 6061 grade alloy, they feature a wheel-adjuster (with a 75mm range) and stainless steel pivot bearings and fasteners. They come in regular or shorty versions, a variety of colours and finishes and are rebuildable. Price noted is for the F3 version.



GILLES LEVERS

FROM £86.00

WWW.PERFORMANCEPARTS-LTD.COM

Luxembourg-based Gilles make lots of aftermarket parts for some manufacturers, like BMW, but it caters for a huge range of other bikes too. As well as lever guards, these levers come in folding (XLGT) and standard (FX) configuration, in different colours and finishes. The FX is TUV approved and has an engineered 'weak point' that should still allow full function even if it breaks. The XLGT has 50 adjustment settings, and has been used by Yamaha's MotoGP team. If that's not reason enough to try them out, we can't think of a better one!



R&G RACING LEVER GUARDS

£149.99

WWW.RG-RACING.COM



You know that moment on a trackday where someone has just nearly banged into the side of you, right about where your brake lever is? It's at that point you realise that lever guards aren't just solely about racing or looking cool. These sweet carbon-fibre items from R&G Racing are gorgeous, beautifully built and don't interfere ergonomically with your braking action due to a slight kink in the design. Very smart, both in purpose and as a purchase.

RIZOMA LEVERS & GUARDS

FROM £85.00

WWW.MOORESPEEDRACING.CO.UK

Rizoma is one brand that's growing and growing in popularity in the UK. Superb build quality and functionality snares many a buyer, and we can see why having fitted the Italian stuff ourselves. These lever Proguards are cool and reasonably cheap at £85, although the Racing versions are £251. The levers, like the RRC, are also stunning in the flesh. They come in folding (£143) and non-folding (£101) options and feature a simple, easy to access adjuster on top.



RENTHAL INTELLILEVERS

£90.72

WWW.BANDCEXPRESS.CO.UK

These levers from Renthal have to be felt in action to be believed. They somehow manage to make the lever feel light and also slight. At first it's a bit weird, and then a lot of other levers afterwards feel like you're stroking a thick branch! They have a lovely build quality to them, a natty adjuster wheel for span changes and are competitively priced. Renthal also does an optional remote adjuster (£56.02) for easy reach antics and race-cred cool.



TWM LEVERS & GUARDS

£59.99

WWW.BIKERSDISCOUNTSTORE.CO.UK



TWM is a growing brand in the UK, but a brilliant one nonetheless. The Italian product is used by many in the BSB paddock and grids across the globe, and you can even have them engraved with whatever you desire, should you order enough of them (serial crashers take note). The excellent GP1 lever is span-adjustable, foldable, CNC machined and comes in short or long versions. The lever-guards (£59.99) come in different colours and are length adjustable.

LIGHTTECH ALIEN GRIP LEVERS

£49.19

WWW.REACTIVEPARTS.COM

Made from magnesium, while gorgeously finished in black and used by WSB and Moto2 teams, these LightTech Alien Grip levers are proper boss. There is a decent colour choice available for the Alien inserts to improve feel and grip, and the levers are built to fit all standard and Brembo radial master cylinders.



BONAMICI LEVERS

FROM £78.00

WWW.SPEEDYCOM.CO.UK

We've used Bonamici's rearsets before, which are utterly superb, and are looking forward to trying out some of the firm's levers too, like these. They're machined and finished superbly, have an adjustable lever span via a wheel and are also foldable. Bonamici also does lever guards, which we featured last month (£79 or £90 with Ti screws), and there's a remote adjuster (£89) should you wish to go the whole hog.



SPEEDYCOM EVO III LEVER

£149.99

WWW.SPEEDYCOM.CO.UK



The EVO III lever is a thing of beauty, no doubt, and comes emblazoned with the Speedycom logo. It's claimed that this lever can increase the power of a braking system by up to 30 per cent, and has been used by several race teams in various disciplines and series. Factory issue!

Gearred Up

ALL THE LATEST, COOLEST & TRICKEST PERFORMANCE PRODUCTS

K-TECH: IDS CARTRIDGES

■ Not got fancy twidler things on your bike? Stuck with the suspension settings that the manufacturer gave you? Bereft of anything to fiddle with? Worry no more, because if you slide these fancy K-Tech IDS cartridges into your bike's fork legs (or, rather, get someone qualified to do so), then you'll have a new world of adjustment to play with. Now compression and rebound adjustment is available to be played with (each leg

independent of the other), and these cartridges offer 30 clicks of the stuff for you to get perfectly settled with. There's also 18mm of preload to play with. For the likes of the base Street Triple or the new raft of A2 bikes, you could literally transform your bike with this (not so) little investment. Talk to your local K-Tech dealer who'll advise you on what springs to run with them. Control is a click away...

£595.00

www.ktechsuspension.com



DAINESE: UNDERWEAR

■ You've got the leathers. You've got the boots. You've got the gloves. Now buy the underwear! In its attempt to conquer the world, well, the human body, the Big D is now offering a new range of underwear.



Coming in the form of t-shirts and shorts, this bike specific range uses clever materials to wick moisture away from the areas of the body that make it. In cold weather, go for the D-Core Thermo stuff that will keep things from falling off in the cold. When it's hot you'll need the D-Core Dry to keep you cool.

FROM £34.99

www.dainese.com

DENALI: SOUNDBOMB MINI

■ Twice as loud as a standard horn, this aural upgrade should frighten the living bejesus out of any errant road user. Being just 82 x 86 x 63mm you should find somewhere to snugly fit it and then you can just let it loose at your leisure. At three feet it produces 113dB on pure horn. It should just plug and play, too.



£23.99

www.rg-racing.com

SHARK: SKWAL TRION

■ Sticking some lights on a lid is a, ahem, bright idea. Shark's SKWAL lid uses its LED lighting system to provide extra visibility front and rear that at this time of year can be a real boon. The lights can be set to constant, flashing or off, and should last for up to eight hours. The lid itself is an injected thermo plastic jobbie, meaning it's not the, ahem again, lightest of lids at 1,470 grams. But there is a sun visor inside, the Sharktooth Bluetooth system can be fitted to it, and there's an autoseal system that means that the visor offers better resistance to wind and rain. There's a Pinlock in the box too. Tidy.



£199.99

www.nevis.uk.com

SW-MOTECH: GSX-S 1000F LUGGAGE

■ You'll read all about the merits of the new Suzuki GSX-S1000F in the upcoming pages, but while we were racing across the land on it we did ponder about its luggage carrying capabilities. There's no official hard luggage, but thanks to the likes of SW-Motech you can sling some snazzy soft luggage on the back. The Rearbag (£129.35) and Blaze panniers (£190.96) provide up to 78-litres of storage, which if you can't make do with that then you need to have a word with yourself. The panniers use a Quick-Lock rail that clamps to the footrest hangers, that then make removal a piece of the proverbial. Meanwhile, the rearbag is big enough to fit your lid. Both have waterproof inner bags to keep your grundies dry...



FROM £129.35

www.motohaus.com

AURITECH: HEARING PROTECTORS

■ We've used, and been impressed with, Auritech's hearing protectors in



the past, and now the firm has launched a Mark II version of the plugs after extensive research and development. They use a patented ceramic filter that is located deep into the ears to protect your lugholes from road noise – while making conversation on the like easy peasy. They clean with just soapy water (wax on, wax off...) and are hypoallergenic. Not sexy, but nor's deafness...

£19.95

www.auritech.info

BULL-IT: VOLOCE JEANS

■ Do you see what Bull-It has done with the naming of these jeans? Yes, the CE in VoloCE makes reference to the garment's Level 2 CE protection – yes, for a jean! This is the top-of-the-range Bull-It product and uses a material called Covec, rather than the more ubiquitous Kevlar as found in other jeans. This offers high impact abrasion resistance and low thermal conductivity. It also resists moisture much better, whereas this can affect the lifetime performance of Kevlar products. They hit the shops at £199.99, so they're not cheap, but for all day comfort, brilliant safety features and smart looks they make a more than enticing offer.



£199

www.bull-it.com

REV-IT: REPLICASUIT

■ Note to self; wear more Rev-It gear. This top-of-the-range Replica suit typifies the quality of the brand – but we've been impressed across the board with Rev-It. This is made from what's called Monaco Performance cowhide (not sure if that refers to F1 or gambling), with stretch panels in the appropriate areas. The company's Betac CE protection is at the shoulders, elbows and knees, there is EVA foam on the hips and back, and there's also a Level 2 back protector insert included. Your arse is covered by two layers of leather. The suit is fully perforated, and there's a hydration bag to suck on for good measure, while the lining is all fully removable. Comfort cuffs and collar ensures maximum comfort while on (it).



£799.99

www.revit.eu

R&G RACING: MATS

■ You may think that your bike is full factory, but unless it's sat on paddock stands on top of a fancy mat in your garage then it ain't worth a dime. So add the final touch to your machine's recumbent pleasure by splashing out, and not over, one of these R&G mats. Tough and chemical and abrasion resistant, they are also washable and have a non-slip backing to ensure they stay flat. The 'garage' version is 2m x 0.75m while the 'workshop' version is double the width.



£39.99

www.rg-racing.com

EVR: AIR BOX



■ To make a bike more powerful you just need to make the bang bigger. This can be done in a number of ways – one of which is to get more oxygen mixed with more fuel. That's where an Italian-made EVR air box comes in. Upping air on the way in by a quarter, the pre-preg carbon fibre built box also hits the scales at just 1.64kg, meaning that there are other benefits too. In fact, it's a crying shame that all this lusciousness has to be then covered over by the tank, but at least you'll know of the potency underneath. You'll obviously have to take your bike (this unit is for a Ducati 848/1098/1198) to a dyno to get it mapped accordingly, but if you can afford the outlay then a few quid thrown at a good dyno operator will be money well spent.

£1,300

www.speedycom.com

VR46: BABYGROW

■ To give your newborn a fighting chance of a decent life you have to buy him or her this, in babygrow terms, the true GOAT. Made from cotton and available in sizes from six months to two years, you'll have the quickest kid in the kindergarten and in buying it you will be very 'appy indeed.



£22.00

www.vr46.it

REV-IT: SAFEBAY BELT

■ If you're tired of your jacket riding up when you go out, then get yourself this clever belt from Rev-It. The belt goes through the loopholes in your jeans when you can then zip it to the bottom of your jacket. Rev-It wants this pairing to be its own products, and that's why the jeans have diagonally placed belt loops that are doubled up at the back.



£64.99

www.revit.eu

Used Products

PERFORMANCE PRODUCTS USED AND ABUSED

DAINESE: FULL METAL PRO GLOVE

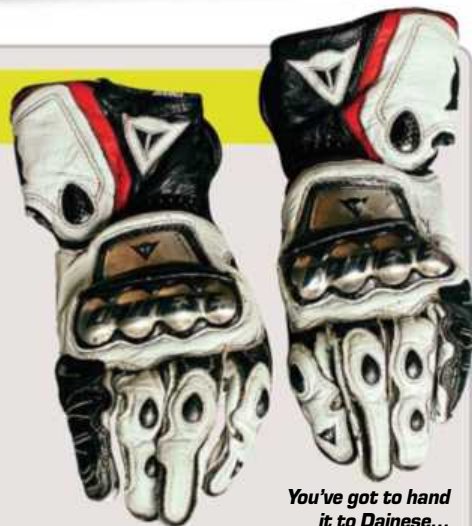
■ Having not fallen off for a while, I'd fallen into something else – complacency. A week or so earlier I was wondering how people actually crash, such was my confidence in my riding. I'd forgotten that some people have no clue as to how to drive as my new ride in is straight forward and relatively hazard free. I should have seen that as the first warning sign to up my alertness...

With a three hour trip to a CSS school at Cadwell ahead of me, I was genuinely pottering northwards at the end of a beautiful day. Being on track the next day, I was in full kit, but hadn't paid much attention to what I was wearing beyond what I was comfortable in – after all, I was going to be spending the next 16-hours in the stuff. As it turned out it was considerably

less as has been well documented to date.

The damage to my hand was officially noted as 'fracture dislocation of fourth and fifth metacarpals plus displaced hamate fracture plus fracture base of second metacarpal' and what that meant was a very hurty hand with the knuckle and fingers broken into about 15 bits that required three external k-wires to poke out of my hand for five weeks, making it look as if I'd been in some horrific industrial fishing accident. So you'd think I'd be bitching about my gloves, with that being the case. No siree, Bob. These Daineses did a magnificent job of saving considerable further damage and are the reason why I've been able to work from home – as opposed to mope from hospital.

I think the impact was born almost fully on my hand, the car hitting it first. On first inspection, the damage looks pretty superficial until you look a bit closer, when you'll see the crush damage done to the titanium knuckle guard. The glove has largely retained its integrity in the collision, with the impact just prising open a 1cm gap on the crush side and then the carbon protection on the other side detaching itself from the main glove due to the forces inflicted on it (I reckon it was an impact speed of around 35mph – 25mph on both parts, but it was a side impact, not head on). Given that the impact was



You've got to hand it to Dainese...

A crushing blow...



from the side, rather than above, I think that the glove has held up remarkably well. Other than that, marking is light. It takes some force to crush metal in such fashion, and I wince to think what my injury would have been without it. Despite that, they're only fit for the bin now.

On top of all that, I've loved these gloves. They're super comfortable, offer bags of feel and have offered two years of sterling service with no sign that they were ready for the scrap heap just yet. Yes, they're expensive but I value my little fingers more than the extra £50-odd quid over another set of gloves. Without a thought I'd wear another set.

£279.99

www.dainese.com

DAINESE: TORQUE RS OUT BOOTS

■ My hand took most of the force of the impact, but after groaning about it on the road for a bit it was apparent that my left foot hurt too. I've already got metalwork in my ankle, and it causes me all sorts of grief, so I was worried that I'd done something here as well. The paramedic took the boot off and was greeted with good slug of claret, which wasn't a good sign...

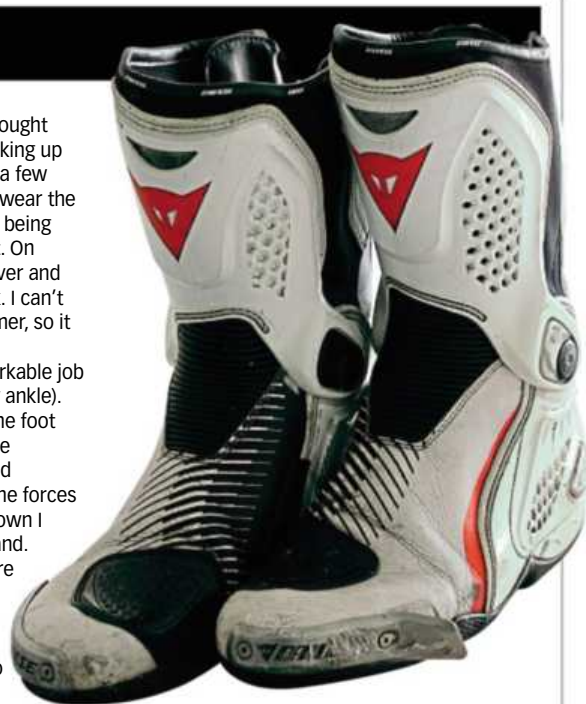
But once at the hospital an x-ray showed that there was nothing broken. The doctor glued the split between my second and third toe, and though the scar tissue meant it was difficult to walk, that was preferable to needing anything

more than Pritt Stick between my toes.

I didn't give my injury there much thought until Charlie returned my boot after picking up the pieces of the accident. There were a few scuffs, and were that it I'd be happy to wear the boots again. But the titanium toe slider being prised back gave me pause for thought. On reflection, I think my left foot got run over and the car's tyre prised the toe slider back. I can't push it back into place, nor can a hammer, so it was some serious force to do this.

This means that the boot did a remarkable job (aided, I think, by the two screws in my ankle). The D-Axial system, designed to stop the foot from twisting, did exactly that, while the protection elsewhere did a top job. I had massive bruising to my sole, a sign of the forces involved, but once the swelling went down I could concentrate on the pain in my hand.

And, like the gloves, these boots were a loyal companion over two years, offering comfort, security and no little style to proceedings. The insides got a little marked up over time, but this is to be expected and didn't damage the integrity of the boot at all. Again, I wouldn't hesitate on sticking another pair of these on...



Top boots, great protection



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WORDS: BENJAMIN J KUBAS CRONIN PICS: MILAGRO

DUCATI MONSTER 1200 R

We expected a naked Panigale 1299 for 2016. Instead, we got a Monster affixed with an R....

Last year's Monster 1200 was a slightly strange beast. While its skills upon the road were displayed wonderfully on the launch, and on subsequent tests such as our Naked Sportsbike Of The Year, when it came to any kind of track action it fell apart all too soon. This was unusual for Ducati, as the previous Monster incarnations leading up to the 1200, especially the 1100 version, had a rapier-like gait on circuit, like they were motorcycle go-karts. They weren't particularly powerful, but could cut the rug like a pro.

Prior to the launch, we'd imagined the 'S' iteration would be the one that would take the fight to the other naked contenders. However at NSBOTY 2014, a dashing start around Sicily's volcano ringing roads was curbed as soon as we took to the track. Unbelievably poor ground clearance was mostly to blame, but not only that, it just didn't seem suited to that kind of endeavour especially on a fast track and with such a (low) rear-end weight bias. Honestly, after just two laps on the S at Pergusa I got so bored and fed up with trying to make it do things it wasn't able to, I just did big wheelies instead.

This lack of track etiquette led us to believe that there may be a naked Panigale on the way, one which could take Aprilia's Tuono, KTM's 1290 SuperDuke R and BMW's S 1000 R to task. However, Ducati had something else up its sleeve, the same sleeve filled with singular Rs it would occasionally stick on the end of a bike's designation when it was rather special. This time it stuck one on the end of the Monster 1200's moniker.

So, then, what exactly denotes the differences over the S and this new R version? First up is power, with a claimed 10bhp hike and extra torque. A new exhaust, larger throttle-bodies and an increased compression ratio are responsible for the claimed 160bhp and 131Nm of torque, but it's the chassis side of things where we're really interested in the new R.

While there have been minor adjustments here and there to the traditional trellis set-up, the new sub-frame allows the pillion pegs to hang off it, rather than the doubled-up item on the (now) riff-raff versions. As such, rider pegs don't stick out as far, and are billet machined for extra grip. Better yet, the whole chassis has been raised at both ends by 15mm, and







The new Brembo stoppers are amazing



Sexy wheel. Not so sexy pipe...

Highlights

- Added track skills
- 2kg lighter
- Gear indicator!
- But no quickshifter
- 207kg (kerb)
- 160bhp (claimed)

- **TRACK** 8
Better with fiddling
- **FAST ROAD** 10
It's going to be amazing
- **HOOLIGAN** 9
Turn electronics off = Boo ya!
- **NEW RIDER** 6
Start with the 821
- **DESIRABILITY** 9
One for the dream garage



Flash dash



Could be off a superbike



No shock it's Ohlins!

the seat height upped to 830mm. This should stop all that grinding in theory. Here's hoping.

To complement its new arse, the tail-piece has been redesigned to be sportier. In fact, that, along with other parts and some carbon-fibre, has led to a 2kg reduction in dry weight.

The proving ground to see whether or not all Ducati's changes had added the extra edge to the Monster we were after was Ascari. Yes, it's a rich boy's playground, but also a brilliant place for naked sportsbikes to be put through their paces. It's also reasonably scary in certain places, walls rather close to the track – although painted green so you don't notice them too much. It's important to add this doesn't stop one from riding like a twat, as it's such a fantastic circuit. Having ridden other naked Ducatis there, as well as current rivals such as the KTM 1290 SuperDuke R and Triumph Speed Triple, I had a wealth of experience to compare it against.

Pulling out of pitlane, shuffling to get comfortable, it's nice to see the bike still has



It doesn't disappoint on track...

what passes for a 'normal' riding position even for us tall-ish types. The only oddity is a peculiar gap between the bar end and grip on the left side of the bar, which isn't replicated on the right. Anyway, near irrelevant observations aside it was time to bed into Ascari. Initial impressions are very good, especially after spending a lot of time on the S version. The R feels reasonably light, lithe on its toes and nothing ground out when I started to think about going around a corner. Ducati claims the bike can achieve a 50-degree lean angle, which actually isn't as much as you may think, and which I'll get onto a bit later.

As the laps ticked over and confidence and speed increased, the newfound skills were abundantly clear. It honestly didn't take long to realise that this is a night/day situation to the S. In fact, the engine feels even smoother than its siblings, although that could also be because apart from two corners at Ascari, you're always reasonably high up the rev-range. Even though most of the maximum

torque is done by 3,500rpm, the remainder still carries the bike meaningfully out of turns, so third gear could be used for most corners and the back section was tackled entirely in this gear all day; rolling on and off the gasser using different degrees and speeds of opening proved the motor and fuelling is very versatile.

On second gear turns (two hairpins), it would thud-thud-thud out of there with reasonable gusto, front wheel skimming the Tarmac before manually quickshifting up to third. Which brings me to the lack of a quickshifter, which is a glaring miss (although Ducati says it's still working on one which should be available as an official accessory). Ducati is still trying to get the balance of action right between road and track work, apparently. The 'box is slick enough though, you can get away with it, but at this price point you'd kind of expect it there already. Another difference is the R has a gear indicator. Now, on the launch of the S we weren't buying the lame excuses as to why



It's an R, in case you forgot...



New, fat bore pipes



TERMI'S ALIVE!

Rejoice Termignoni fans, it still has a place in Ducati-Land. When the D-boys made their alliance with Akrapovic with the new Panigales we feared the worst, especially as their association has been going on so long. Like Suzuki and Yoshimura, fish and chips, bacon and butties, Ducati and Termignoni went together in everyone's minds. The good news is that they will still be making kit for Ducati! However, from now it seems as though Termi' will take care of the entire range that isn't a sportsbike. Thus, there's this gorgeous little twin-exit number available for the Monster. And it's necessary, as the new exhaust on the R makes it a quiet machine. The worst is slated to add power and drop weight, and is just one of a whole host of official accessories, including even more carbon trinkets and machined brake reservoirs to name but a few.



A must, we'd venture!

Verdict 8.5/10

A great update. Fast and furious enough, Gucci no doubt, though curiously quiet for a Ducati...

+ HANDLING, ENGINE, ELECTRONICS, NORMAL PEGSI
- BIT PRICEY, NO 'SHIFTER, NOT A NAKED PANIGALE

there wasn't one, so are not surprised to see it installed on the R. They're not necessary, true, but sometimes it's nice to be able to just do a quick glance if you've lost track. That and the fact we're spoiled now; we want all the toys!

Anyway, two sessions down and the Monster was really going nicely, but a couple of issues raised their heads. First off was while going around the last banked turn. Throwing it in was rewarding with a loud 'scrrrrsh' and a slight unsettling of the bike. The other problem was that I was starting to scare myself a bit. There's a super-fast turn, fourth or fifth gear, where you just knock off from full throttle a touch, sling it right onto your knee and then get back on the gas without running off track at high speed. The faster I went, the more vague the front was until it was sheer faith getting me through. A gentle fall of rain called time, and once in the

pits the front tyre looked like it was doing a lot of work. And it turned out that the scraping noise turned out to be the side-stand. And the gear lever. Gulp...

In fact, a couple of folk properly bent theirs, and you can just imagine the implications of that should it change gear the wrong way at lean flat-out in third! Additionally, the exhaust valve cover on the right side was also touching. Anyway, when it dried out again the Monster still impressed, although I did adjust my lean angle on the left side.

For the last two sessions, one of Ducati's test riders suggested some adjustments. The trick suspension is there, so use it. On the fast right, the front fork would lift back up too quickly, no matter how I tried to load it, be that leaning forward, caressing the brake, or whatever. That was causing the vague feeling. Some extra compression and rebound was



TECHNICAL Ducati Monster 1200 R



ENGINE	Type	1,198.4cc, liquid-cooled L-twin
	Bore x Stroke	106 x 67.9mm
	Compression	13.0:1
	Fuelling	Electronic fuel injection
	Claimed Power	160bhp @ 9,250rpm
	Claimed Torque	131Nm @ 7,750
ELECTRONICS	RBW/Riding Modes	Yes/ Three
	Traction Control	Yes/ Eight levels
	ABS	Yes
	Quickshifter	No
	Wheelie Control	Yes
CHASSIS	Launch Control	No
	Frame	Tubular steel trellis
	Front Suspension	48mm Öhlins fork, fully adjustable
	Rear Suspension	Öhlins monoshock, fully adjustable
	Front Brakes	Brembo four-piston calipers, 330mm discs
	Rear Brakes	Brembo two-piston caliper, 245mm disc
DIMENSIONS	Wheelbase	1,509mm
	Seat Height	830mm
	Dry Weight	207kg
	Fuel Capacity	17.5L
PRICE	Price	£15,250
	From	www.ducatiuk.com

ENGINE The R represents another marked step up in power, to the tune of 10bhp over the S, itself 10bhp more powerful than the stock bike. The extra power was achieved mainly through three modifications. Firstly compression was upped to 13:1, and then the throttle bodies were enlarged to 56mm. Next was the exhaust, adding a whopping 8mm to a maximum diameter of 58mm. The entire system is new, in fact. Electronics have been upgraded software-wise, but remain with an 8-level traction control choice. The throttle is full ride-by-wire. No quickshifter...

CHASSIS The new Öhlins front fork is taller than before, and of a higher specification (read different internals) than the S. The same is true for the rear shock as well, both front and back are multi-adjustable. There's also an adjustable Öhlins steering-damper fitted. The subframe is new, rider and pillion pegs are now separated and the chassis raised to increase ground clearance. There's a 3-level Bosch ABS system active with the sublime Brembo M50 calipers. Wheels are light forged aluminium Marchesini items, tyres are Pirelli Supercorsas – the rear a 200-section job.

Monster'ing Ascari...


Mind that stand!

prescribed, but he also thought I was too tall and heavy, which meant too much rear-end bias, so a couple of mm of preload on the rear was stuck on, putting a bit more weight on the bars. It was much better through there from then on, in fact the entire bike improved with essentially just a few clicks. Fast changes of direction were far more stable for a start. Plus it would scorch through that fast turn easier and I could lean it as much as I wanted without anything scraping (too much...).

However, the great god of set-up, he giveth and he taketh away. The extra preload meant a minor reduction in rear grip, and also a slight speed wobble pulling the bike upright from fast sections. But, still, this is how I'd want it, and the traction control was superb, tidying up any hamfisted requests I made with the set-up.

I have to say, I was really impressed with the R, it deserves the capitalisation, yet there

are just a couple of points to consider. It's still not a bike like the Tuono. The R has been evolved from a roadster base and, good as it is, you can still feel that road-based purpose in its DNA, and it should thus be epic on the highways. The lack of a quickshifter is a miss, and at this price one that leads to a point reduction. Then there's the fact that really, this is the Monster Ducati should have built in the first place, and part of me thinks it kinda realises this or it wouldn't exist. Did you also not wonder where the gripes about a twisted right leg were, too? That's because on the R you don't need physiotherapy after a ride, the new peg and exhaust (finally!) fixes this.

There's still a place for the S and stock machine, both brilliant road bikes, but quite honestly if it's a Monster you're after – and popping on track now and then is a must – bypass both. Open wide and say R... 





WORDS: FAGAN

PICS: THE SAWLER

The Tourer Führer?

Which bike is king when it comes to continental corner conquering? The new boys in this much maligned class – the BMW R 1200 RS and Suzuki GSX-S1000F – take on the venerable Kawasaki Essex. Sorry, Z1000SX



*Tired, run down, uninhabited.
But the sports-tourer class
has suddenly got busy!*

One-piece leathers or a more casual, touring-based ensemble? That's what was going through my mind before this test, rather than the usual pre-ride excitement and trouser-tenting capers that usually accompany a Fast Bikes hoon session.

Very much like music genres, which have been made ever more difficult to categorise in these changing times, bikes have evolved into hybrids, crossbreeding the hell out of each other and making the all-decisive pigeonholing problematic and confusing for the end user. Some will go, "I can't own one of those boring things, it's a sports-tourer," while other bemoan, "Nah, it's too sporty because it has a full fairing." At the end of the day, the throttle's on the right. If you like it, you like it. Just ride it, like we're about to...


Suzuki's all-new GSX-S1000F is the perfect example. Based heavily on one of our favourite sportsbikes ever created, the GSX-R1000 K5, Suzuki engineers wrapped the motor (with certain modernised upgrades) in a

fresh chassis, and whacked an archetypal touring frontage onto the 1000F to meet de rigueur sports-touring regulations. Job done. However, during the GSX's launch on the Isle of Man, Suzuki officials were ardent in dismissing the bike as a sports-tourer. So, what exactly is it then? A few days aboard the Suzuki and its closest rivals was the only way to come to some sort of a conclusion.

A few years back, Kawasaki was at this caper too. After flopping its meaty Z1000 naked weapon on the counter, a more touring-biased derivative was soon unveiled, complete with luggage options and a larger tank. It was christened the Z1000 Essex, or SX for short – and is the GSX's most direct competitor on paper. It was the first sports-tourer that got any of us excited, with genuine sporting credentials blended with impressive functionality and some all important wind protection. Yet it was perfectly at home being spanked on circuit. We like it a lot.

Over in the blue and white corner, BMW takes a far more bespoke

approach at sports-touring with the revised R 1200 RS. The RS suffix conjures up visions of limited edition racing specials, and funny old Fords that attract middle-aged men into regularly meeting up in car parks usually reserved for dogging. BMW's RS, however, is a very different proposition – you don't have to boast Professor Brian Cox levels of expertise to understand that the R 1200 is the runt of the trio when it comes to horsepower, but thankfully this German roadster more than makes up for the lack of gonads with comfort and joy, comfort and joy.

So what are the prerequisites for a sports-tourer – or whatever the manufacturers want to call them? Well, it isn't solely about how much luggage you can chuck on or fuel economy that rivals a Prius. Heaps of sporting aptitude obviously sways the job here at FB towers to join the more hackneyed criteria such as long distance abilities. A bike that doesn't give you a nasty case of Farmer Giles after 50 miles in the saddle also helps. You could say all-round versatility... 



BMW R 1200 RS

Like Jonny, my faithful snapping sidekick, I simply cannot get excited about the GSX-S's scooter-like face. I'm also struggling to get moist when ogling over the BMW's somewhat conventional Teutonic lines. There's no doubt the RS is far less glamorous in the eye candy department than its rivals, but it's an exceptional bike in accommodating hands, and could win tests written by older men, perhaps recovering from prostate treatment. It was a shame Rootsy's hand was still bugged... It's also effortless to ride, engaging an almost autopilot attitude when comparing to the Japanese four-pots, which hints at its lack of hooliganism and sportiness. Sat snugly aboard, the world is front if you. So is the RS's gargantuan cockpit. Then again, something has to house the abundance of toys, buttons and associated paraphernalia, and the RS wins the gadget contest by a country mile. Needless to say, this was the all-singing, all-

dancing, all-everything-ing model with every available optional extra present – an attribute that can often be complicating when it comes to conclusions.

For a stumpy, near six-footer such as myself, it's a sometimes uncomfortable reach to the 'bars. The seat is almost too far back to obtain natural ergonomics – even 7ft tall Jonny unearthed similar issues. Then again, it's a super-long bike. Everything about the R 1200 RS shouts big, and you get the feeling aerodynamics weren't prioritised in the design brief, what with the protruding cylinders and gargantuan arse bossing the show.

Forget the aesthetics and Beemer preconceptions – ridden at legal speeds and sat bolt-upright with the solitary chore of reaching a destination, the RS just might be a winner with a no-nonsense mile-munching aptitude and scope to supply incessant confidence. Trivialities like rubber pegs and the comfiest seat on test are backed up by

exceptional road holding, whatever 'Dynamic' mode is selected. Mediocre lean angles at speed are a cinch, despite the juggernaut-like wheelbase. It also steers briskly (so long as you don't dial-in too much lean), which is a surprise given its looks and length.

If there was ever a definition for stability written into a motorcycling dictionary, the RS would be the answer here. Despite trying desperately hard to upset its serene attitude, the Beemer behaved impeccably; whatever the speed, whatever the environment. But you can't have everything in this world and the BMW's touring excellence ultimately forgoes sporting talent against the more focused Japanese bikes – the facility to store a family of midgets and their pets in the optional official panniers is scant redemption.

With bugger-all ground clearance and its sheer size stymieing speed, inciting kneedown combat is highly ineffective and unnatural, with the steering losing neutrality towards peg scraping lean angles – a square peg, round hole job. The RS's braking capabilities also aren't up to the sporty segment of sports-touring, with average stopping power at best. And it doesn't feel as natural as the other two during corner entry when giving it licks.

If we're talking real-world sensibility, not willy-waving extravagant power, 110bhp is all you'll ever need on UK roads. There's still something innately embroiling about pinning any Boxer-engined Beemer while mindlessly upshifting and abusing the quickshifter – incidentally, the RS possesses the only 'shifter on test. As flatulent as it sounds, the unsexy Boxer delivers instant, linear power and still excites towards the redline. It's never going to torture kittens or leave your legs flailing behind the rear wheel, but it's that instantaneous torque that merits reward, meaning it sounds much faster than it is.

There's a few angles where the BMW shines. This is one of them



Packed to
high heaven!



Doing the
Boxer beat



Should be a
moan free zone



In fact, the entire execution merits reward. Bizarre sideways movements triggered by the engine's configuration aside, the fuelling and throttle response is peachy and ensures exemplary slow-speed skills. Such is the refinement and sheer smoothness, you can ride along in top gear with the throttle closed at 20mph and let the engine do all the hard grafting. The only slight issue with the powerplant is the gearbox. It's positive and we've never missed gears, although downshifts can often sound like a toolbox going through a mangle, all while falling down some stairs. Add the complete lack of engine braking control, where shutting the throttle is akin to hitting a wall, and it's always advisable to hook a higher gear than expected. Don't worry, the motor can take it.

But at the end of the day, it's a Beemer Boxer. And for better or for worse, you should know what you're getting yourself into here.

Verdict 7/10

If being different is important to you, the BMWV could be what you're after – you weirdo!

➤ MUCHO GIZMOS, THUMPY LUMP

➤ BOXER TWINS NOT FOR EVERYONE...



Born to be bad. And the BMW...

BMW R 1200 RS



ENGINE

The GS's 1,170cc Boxer engine is used to power the RS. Like the older motor, it's still a mix of air and liquid cooled. Much attention has been paid to the cooling system for better heat dissipation and 'thermal stability'. Cylinder heads have been treated to flow work and an anti-hopping slipper-ish clutch is used to smoothen downshifts aboard the RS. To suit the sports-touring ethos, changes have been made to the exhaust, radiator and intake system, resulting in added bottom-end grunt for the faired RS. A fresh airbox and intake trumpets are also present.

CHASSIS

The tubular steel bridge frame is identical to the naked R model, but with a longer wheelbase (via a longer swingarm) and sportier headstock geometry with a decreased castor angle. The subframe is made from steel and rider/pillion pegs are manufactured from forged aluminium. 45mm forks sort the front-end, with BMW citing 'packaging benefits' as the reason for swapping from the telelever. The rear is looked after by a single-sided Paralever system. Brembo callipers bite 320mm discs and are mounted to 10-spoke cast wheels.

Highlights

- Faired R 1200 R
- GS Boxer motor
- Brembo brakes
- Electronics galore
- 236kg
- 108bhp

TRACK

It is what it is...

FAST ROAD

Comfy does it

HOOLIGAN

If you try very, very hard

NEW RIDER

A gentle giant

DESIRABILITY

Depends on perspective

Kawasaki Z1000SX

The funkiest, most futuristic stylised steed of the three, Kawasaki's Z1000SX has been the sportiest sports-tourer that Japan has had to offer for years now. Quite rightly, it flew out of Team Green's showrooms when launched back in 2010.

Dynamically, if there was ever a Rocky Balboa/Phil Mitchell bastard lovechild that metamorphosed into a motorcycle capable of long saddle hours, the SX shows all the hallmarks through being a bit of a stumpy loon. It's certainly the edgiest on test.

The riding position is compact, super-snug, natural and upright – not too dissimilar to the Suzuki, although it's a little more pokey as the bars are narrower. In many ways, the Zed sits between the Beemer and GSX when it comes to touring proficiencies. First off, there's a generous 19-litre tank that should give you another 30 miles over the Suzuki – but you'll have to catch it first. Secondly, the luggage options and features like the adjustable screen intensify touring kudos without sacrificing owt in the handling department.

The original SX was softer than soft, so Kawasaki firmed things up and treated the current model to a new rear linkage. It worked, raising its composure and high-speed hustling by another rung without compromising bump management and botty comfort. Rarely does the standard set-up leave you wanting more as it munches UK roads, although its weight can sometimes hamper ultimate assurance. More relaxed geometry and a longer wheelbase over the fully naked Z1000 ensures that the SX is a little less lively than its unclothed brethren. It can still occasionally become unsettled under aggressive acceleration, but there's nothing to warrant going underwear shopping.

There's also no hiding from the Zed's salad dodging tactics when backed-to-backed with

the GSX-S, although its mass of mass handily assists with sucking the front-end to the floor and providing stacks of mechanical grip. The subsequent confidence that seeps through the 'bars emanate from here. Like the cockpit, the whole bike feels short and compact on the hoof and up to (or down to) 20 degrees of lean, it zips from side to side with minimal fuss, happily tailing the Suzuki and annihilating the BMW. Only slower, tighter corners will throw up a challenge at devoted speeds and you can bet a bollock on the supreme braking performance scrubbing off pace anyway – of the trio, the Kawasaki brags the most superior stopping power and confidence to nail corner entry with a more than gifted slipper clutch.

Of course, there's an element of aggression to the Kawasaki at first sight, though it's unassumingly qualified at playing silly buggers. Just make sure you disengage the basic, but highly efficient electronics, as trying to loft a minger with anti-wheelie isn't cool with panniers fitted. Thanks to a well-disciplined, throttle and a torque-infested motor, the SX boasts the accolade of best stunter on test. As simple as the TC is, it's another dart solidly in the 20.

Ignore the dyno numbers – the SX packs copious amounts of punch to appease 99 per cent of us with oodles of low-end and, particularly, midrange guts. Given its cubic and cylinder advantage, we'd expect more from the Zed's powerplant but we have to consider its position in the market. Although deliciously smooth, there's a really heavy sensation to the motor's functionality, but the throttle and fuelling combo is far better than the Suzuki at a more leisurely pace.

Kawasaki has nailed the SX in lots of ways, and as a modular upgrade to the naked Zed, it makes one hell of a tourer. 🏍️



You could get complaints here



Classy control offered



Deals with the weight well



On the hoof there's few bikes finer...



Verdict 8/10

It may have finally been surpassed by the Suzook, but the 'Essex' is still a cracking machine

✦ ENGINE, LOOKS, THROTTLE RESPONSE, FUN
– THE GSX-S 1000F....



KAWASAKI Z1000SX

Touring used to be boring. Not now!



To Essex on the Essex!

ENGINE

The SX uses the same engine as the Z1000, and has been treated to mild tweaks and upgrades over the years. Its choice of bore and stroke means it has character across the range, while dual 38mm throttle-bodies means it's delivered in a lovely fashion. A secondary balancer shaft damps vibes. Exhausts are similar to the Z1000 but with a different finish, and the bike loses a tooth off the rear sprocket over its naked counterpart. The rev limiter cuts ignition, rather than fuel, and the current version features traction control and rider modes.

CHASSIS

Again, using the fashionable modular approach, the SX uses the same frame design as the Z1000. It carries a bigger tank though to the tune of four litres, meaning mucho miles. The windscreen is adjustable while there's ample points for luggage and the like. The rear suspension is horizontally mounted in an aid to mass-centralisation, and to protect it from heat build up. The front fork is a fully adjustable 41mm affair, 45mm longer than the Z1000's. Brakes are four-piston calipers, fitted with ABS, of course.

Highlights

- Based on the Z1000
- Rider Modes
- Traction-control
- Fun, fun, fun!
- 231kg
- 123bhp

TRACK

Pretty nippy

FAST ROAD

Actually quite hilarious

HOOLIGAN

With TC off

NEW RIDER

Girl's got skills

DESIRABILITY

Tasty looker

8

6

9

7

8



Hardly pant filling...



Gets you the grip



Quietly confident

Suzuki GSX-S1000F

Sadly, the hype surrounding the GSX-S's launch period didn't focus on the profusion of positives; it was a love/hate spat regarding the aesthetics and that 'thing' slapped on the front, which looks like a maxi scooter's nose morphed with a bird of prey that's heaving out last night's mouse, all overlooking Suzuki's efforts in creating this niche beauty. Without drawing in childish 'looking at the mantelpiece when stoking the fire' innuendos, it rides far better than it looks...

As well as proclaiming its new creation wasn't a sports-tourer (which it certainly ain't, but more on that in a minute), Suzuki targeted 40-plus ex-superbike riders as the bike's specific demographic. I know I look 40, but I reckon that prediction is a little on the Saga side of reserved, as I genuinely love the GSX-S1000F and the charms it offers.

So, back to the definitive claim that it's not a sports-tourer. There are absolutely no touring traits in the Suzuki's arsenal. For starters, the extras list is bereft of luggage options. The fuel tank is a superbike-sized 17 litres (not that we give a toss), and, ultimately, it's too naughty to be nice. In short, it's a superbike with upright bars for those who can no longer handle the head-down, bum-up protocol and who don't want to concede and buy an adventure bike and the associated ensemble of old-man gear.

Unfortunately, for those that are outraged by its looks, the GSX-S's initial impressions don't get any better when setting off aboard the Suzuki – apart from that one-touch starter button and clutchless trickery. The throttle connection is horrendous from closed to open

at certain revs, which plays havoc with mid-corner shenanigans and slogging through the urban environs. The fuelling and rest of the throttle's action throughout the range is superb, so we can only apportion blame to the cable.

She 'only' churns out 140bhp but the elasticated throttle and soundtrack add fuel to the fire. There's a real sense that the engine is being held back, like it actually has a billion horsepower and struggles to contain its hidden inner frenzy. And as with any sporty Suzuki, the induction bark is a naughty one and partners up with a just-as-naughty sounding exhaust note.

Without carving holes in the road or ripping your arms off, there's plenty of useable grunt to exploit in the lower half of the range that doesn't provoke wheelies, before starting to get a tangible wriggle on at 5,000rpm. Suzuki's four-pot has a lighter revving, more modern execution over the Kawasaki's and revels in the extra revs at the top to abuse. It zips between corners with greater excitement and carries its momentum with ease.

If someone tried telling me that the GSX's traction control system was designed by the same geniuses that devised Kawasaki's KTRC system, it wouldn't take much convincing. Lesser levels of intrusion is the perfect performance-enhancing companion at committed speeds, aiding high-speed steering as the TC's anti-wheelie qualities magnetises the front wheel to the surface.

There's little between the two Japanese rivals at legal speeds, without threatening the pegs to touchdown. Pressing on, the Suzuki feels more like a conventional superbike with firmer, better-controlled suspension and less

weight to worry about, and subsequently less weight transfer issues. Suzuki's fresh chassis design provides mid-corner assurance like no other sports-tourer, sorry, I mean over-40s superbike, and although lacking the initial turn-in speed of the Z1000SX, the GSX-S is another step up on the sporty ladder.

Although nearly identical, the naked version doesn't cut it against superior supernaked rivals. If that bike was launched five years earlier, the narrative might have a different tone. With the relatively minor chassis tweaks and additional wind protection, the faired version is almost like riding another machine altogether, fixing the front-end to the surface for off-the-throttle conviction. In fact, the whole bike shouts mechanical grip throughout any ride.

It ain't perfect, but Suzuki, but luck or by judgement, has got a belter on its hands here. 🏍️



The GSX-S just wants to be a GSX-R...





Wide bars, wide grin...

Verdict 9/10

If there's ever a case of not judging a book by its fugly cover, the GSX-S1000F is it...

✦ SURPRISINGLY SPORTY, GRIP, TC, K5 MOTOR
✦ THROTTLE RESPONSE, FAR FROM SEXY

SUZUKI GSX-S1000F



ENGINE

The 1000F uses the same motor as the naked version, so that's also the same as the K5 with a few tweaks. New piston rings use FEM analysis for rigidity and are 3 per cent lighter than the originals. New cam profiles lend the GSX-S a more suitable power delivery, and the addition of iridium spark plugs adds modernism. Suzuki Composite Electrochemical Material is used to plate the cylinders to reduce friction, among other benefits, and there's also the addition of a liquid-cooled oil cooler (rather than the air-cooled seen on the GSX-R).

CHASSIS

A new frame is lighter than the current GSX-R's and the swingarm is lifted straight from the L5 Gixer. At 1,460mm, the wheelbase is long but the 1000F uses a 25 degree rake angle and 100mm of trail for agility. The ABS version weighs 214kg (kerb) so is competitive against rivals, and the 810mm seat height is one of the lowest in the sector. KYB forks are fully adjustable while the shock is rebound and preload only. Brembo calipers bite 310mm discs at the front and functions in conjunction with a Bosch ABS unit that weighs 640g.

Highlights

- ✦ Fully-faired GSX-S
- ✦ K5-based motor
- ✦ Traction control
- ✦ Easy-start system
- ✦ 212kg
- ✦ 140bhp

TRACK

Bit more go please

FAST ROAD

A fine stead!

HOOLIGAN

Turn off that TC

NEW RIDER

Come one, come all!

DESIRABILITY

Not by the look of it...

Forget touring, just get on with the sporting!

TECH DATA


BMW R 1200 RS

Kawasaki Z1000SX

Suzuki GSX-S1000F

ENGINE	Type	1,170cc, liquid-cooled, Boxer twin	1,043cc, liquid-cooled, inline four	999cc, liquid-cooled, inline-four
	Bore x Stroke	101 x 71mm	77.0 x 56.0mm	73.4 x 59.0mm
	Compression	12.5:1	11.9:1	12.2:1
	Fuelling	BMS-X FI, 52mm throttle bodies	Electronic fuel injection	Dual-injectors, 44mm throttle bodies
	Tested Power	108bhp @ 7,750rpm	123bhp @ 10,000rpm	140bhp @ 10,000rpm
ELECTRONICS	Tested Torque	106Nm @ 6,250rpm	99Nm @ 7,500rpm	103Nm @ 9,500rpm
	RBW/Riding Modes	Yes/Three	Partial/Two	Partial/No
	Traction Control	Yes	Yes, 3 levels	Yes, 3-levels
	ABS	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Quickshifter	Yes	No	No
CHASSIS	Wheelie Control	Yes	No	No
	Launch Control	No	No	No
	Frame	Tubular steel bridge	Aluminium twin-tube	Aluminium twin-spar
	F Suspension	45mm USD semi-active fork	41mm USD fork, fully adjustable	43mm Kayaba USD fork, fully adjustable
	R Suspension	BMW EVO Paralever	Monoshock, fully adjustable	Monoshock, rebound and preload adjustable
DIMENSIONS	Front Brakes	Four-piston calipers, 320mm discs	Four-piston calipers, 300mm discs	Brembo four-piston calipers, 310mm discs
	Rear Brakes	Two-piston caliper, 276mm disc	Two-piston caliper, 250mm discs	Two-piston caliper, 260mm disc
	Wheelbase	1,530mm	1,445mm	1,460mm
	Rake/Trail	27.8 degrees/106mm	25.5 degrees/102mm	25 degrees/100mm
	Seat Height	760-840mm	820mm	810mm
PRICE	Kerb Weight	236kg	231kg	214kg
	Fuel Capacity	18 litres	19 litres	17 litres
	Price	£12,915 (£10,835 – base model)	£9,299 (£9,699 ABS)	£9,999
	From	BMW Motorrad UK www.bmw-motorrad.com	Bristol Kawasaki 01179 772272 www.bristol-kawasaki.co.uk	Suzuki GB www.suzuki-gb.co.uk
	Insurance	Fully Comp: £187.94, £175 excess	Fully Comp: £187.94, £175 excess	Fully Comp: £144.07, £450 excess

Quote: Based on 40 year-old Estate Agent, PE PostCode, Full No Claims
*All include £100k free legal cover, riding other bikes plus EU cover



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Quality doesn't always
have to come at a price...





Don't call me a sports-tourer...

THANKS TO: Bristol Kawasaki for the use of the awesome Z1000SX. Go and buy it now from them! Go to www.bristol-kawasaki.co.uk or call 'em on 0117 977 2272!

Sports-Tourers: The Verdict

However you dress up this test, it's one for the slightly elder statesmen among us, or those with bad backs, or poor eyesight... Personally, I'm not quite ready to relinquish my lust for pure

superbikes. That said, this ever-evolving class has started to fill a tidy little void for those who simply can't resign themselves to buying an adventure bike.

Something that constantly arises on bikes like these is wind

protection and touring comfort during motorway speeds, which frankly is a load of bollocks. One man's perfect is another chap's misery. It's all dependent on height, size and a million other variables. And if a 'touring'

screen isn't set at the perfect height, buffeting and turbulence noise does more harm than no screen at all. Ya get me?

As previously mentioned, the BMW is the black sheep of this level-headed threesome. I 🐑



OK, we admit it. Suzuki is right - this ain't no sports-tourer...

think you've got to really yearn after the R 1200 RS and a group test will never sway your buying decision. Ridden in isolation, it's a near faultless piece of Germanic engineering, but it ultimately lacks the sporting minerals to challenge the other two. But, and this is a big 'but', the RS is the bike I'd choose to tour the continent, so long as I didn't have look at it for the entire trip...

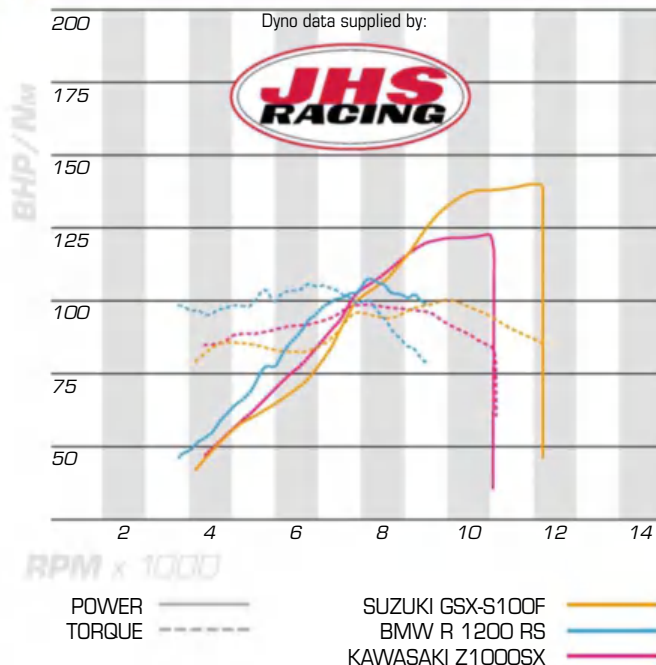
Splitting the Japanese pairing is a far trickier task. Both have similar four-pot characteristics, both can get a hustle on and confront pedigree sportsbikes in the right surroundings, and both wear styling only the beholder can truly appreciate. In typical Fast Bikes testing criteria, the Kawasaki loses out on that last smidgen of athleticism. The SX is not only heavier than the Suzuki, it's also more compromised when it comes to balls-out handling, and the GSX brags that intrinsic extra morsel of superbike heroics. If we're judging on orthodox

sports-touring principles, the Kawasaki edges it. And if you're not hell-bent on scratching, it could also come down to what bike tickles your fancy in the aesthetics department. The few hundred quid saving made by choosing the Kawasaki isn't worth discussing.

Having sampled the 1000F on circuit several times, it's also the only option if you're chucking a few trackdays onto your calendar as well as a jaunt to the South of France. Only hero blobs - so big you no longer deserve hero status - and intrusive ABS will scupper track work.

Wouldn't you know it, ultimately Suzuki's portrayal of the GSX-S is accurate. It's a sportsbike with upright 'bars, tailored for road-only activities. There's nothing groundbreaking engineered into the 1000F, but sometimes a manufacturer gets it bang-on and, iffy throttle aside, Suzuki has done so with this puppy. **FB**

POWER AND TORQUE





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SIX OF THE BEST

Some manufacturers offer us the chance of a few laps on one of their special bikes. Not BMW, they bring half a dozen to the party and set the light to green!

BMW's race department is all about sharing the love. Having stepped back from WSB in factory guise, the intimate knowledge of the mighty S 1000 RR collected over five seasons in the series has not gone to waste. The German factory's strategy now is to distribute every last ounce of information to the customers that buy the bike – namely teams, racers and even trackdayers that choose the Beemer to do battle with.

Coming from a world that's enormously secretive, where data and information are preciously hoarded and never shared, this is an unparalleled state of affairs. But it makes perfect sense for BMW because it is, of course, a business. Its role is to sell bikes and make money. Building an absolute shit-kicker in the first place is a great start, and the success of the bike on the sales floor is proof of this. But to enhance its reputation, as well as generating more sales to racers, BMW is offering unprecedented levels of support to riders who'd previously never dreamed of

being the recipient of such help. This brings more data flooding into the Berlin race HQ, the bikes are made better, racers lift up more trophies and BMW sells more bikes. They call it a virtuous circle. It's such an intelligent use of the race resource that could have easily been disbanded after the retreat from WSB.

From WSB and endurance racing through to national series and even down into club racing, BMW is there to support racers who have backed the brand and bought a Beemer. Even road riders can tap into this support. Over 100 riders have registered for the BMW Motorrad Race Trophy this year (up from nearly 60 last year), which is effectively an in house competition between riders that is run right around the world. A pre-season race camp at Almeria points teams and riders in the right direction. Here, base set-ups are sorted and teams given access to some serious insider knowledge. This then helps to breed the collaborative atmosphere riding under the BMW banner, with both the race department

and teams across the world able to offer insight and guidance to others.

And the results of this set-up speak for themselves. There have been race wins across the world in short circuit racing, road racing titles and record laps have been smashed, the German IDM championship now belongs to BMW, the bike is a force in the world endurance championship and remains an effective tool in WSB.

To showcase the bike, and the race program as a whole, BMW organised a big jamboree at Valencia. If you're into your RRs, then this was the place to be, as after getting our eye in on a standard bike we'd then have a five course taster menu, featuring bikes from the South African championship, the IDM series winner, Tommy Bridewell's BSB bike, the Penz13.com endurance machine and then Ayrton Badovini's WSB bike – you'll have read about Guy Martin's bike in last month's mag. Yup, we were going to have some Beemer-based indigestion after that little lot...



Available in every colour, so long as it's blue and white...

STANDARD: BMW S 1000 RR

First up was the standard bike, a known quantity to acquaint myself with Valencia with. Three laps was hardly enough, especially around the infectious Valencia circuit, but with another five bikes to sample, the swift seat time was born from necessity.

As a base package, it's nothing short of magnificent. One moment you think the engine is the star performer here, and the next you're knee deep into a corner and lavishing praise on the chassis. Ergonomics are impressive, but even with the electronics wound down low they still intrude obviously on exits. Wearing stock Metzeler Racetec rubber, there's more than enough grip, but the electronics don't fully integrate with the DDC electronic suspension over some of the rippled surfaces and run out onto the kerb, so the formidable drive the bike is capable of is stymied somewhat. It's all dial-outable, made almost idiot proof with the electronic suspension, but as soon as my three laps were over, I was quickly ushered onto the Black Swan machine as piloted by former WSB rider Lance Isaacs.

Lights, indicators, action!



Power:	198bhp @ 13,500rpm
Torque:	113Nm @ 10,500rpm
Front suspension:	46mm Sachs forks, DDC suspension
Rear suspension:	Sachs shock, DDC suspension
Brakes:	Brembo four-piston calipers, Race ABS
Dry weight:	175.5kg
Tank capacity:	17.5 litres



Almost standard, This SA Beemer still felt different

SA Superbike Permissible Changes

Exhaust system from the headers
Rear suspension internals
Front suspension spring
175kg minimum weight
External quickshifter
Brake pads
External fuelling module
Internal ECU software changes

RSA SBK GP: Black Swan Energy BMW S 1000 RR

In terms of modifications, this was a bike that had barely been breathed upon. The South African SuperGP class is as close to standard as you can get, with the regulations allowing no internal engine mods, and very little allowed to be done with the chassis and suspension. This bike still uses the Sachs

electronic suspension, Isaacs saying that all the changes are done electronically, so there's been no change of springs or rebuilds within the units. Only an end can and link pipe is allowed, so power gains from the Akrapovic slip-on are slight – the main benefit being weight loss. Isaacs' main warning to me

before my three laps were that the SBS brake pads offered a softer initial bite, the South African not adapting to the sharp bite from the standard pads.

What the bike does have is the HP Race PowerKit and Race Calibration Kit 3 in place to modulate the electronics, as well as a Power Commander V with secondary fuel module and auto tuner, and it's here that the biggest difference over the standard bike is felt. There is now a direct link, a very direct link, between what you ask for and what you get, meaning that exiting turn two for the first time was a rude awakening to the bike's throttle response – it turned out to be the sharpest throttle of the lot. Because of the massive amounts of torque generated, any minor addition at the gasser is magnified at the wheel, meaning you need to be sure that you want to add acceleration to the party. It's this that primarily alerts you to the bike's state of tune, although ditching the road gear and losing weight adds an appreciable degree of agility to the machine.

With a tyre to look after and a long line of ham fisted journos still to ride the bike, the DTC was set too high, so not only was the light strobing away that it'd cause an epileptic to have a fit, but progress was significantly stalled coming out of a handful of corners. The RR and Pirelli rubber is capable of much more, but especially through the penultimate long left (you know, the one that the MotoGP boys go through sideways) the electronics cut in, the bike pitches forward, you then get more power, the rear squats and the back unit just feels like it's pumping unnecessarily throughout the corner.

Play with the electronics, and the gearing, and you'd be in business, but my three laps were frustrating. There's so much more potential in the package that would be easily unearthed with the press of a few buttons and a few more laps, but as an opening gambit goes things were looking good.



Handsome, if light on the optional extras



IDM: Van Zon-Remeha BMW S 1000 RR

So far, so standard, but the next bike proved to be a big jump forward. The German IDM series is kinda BSB-lite, so given the strengths and weaknesses of the BMW, it should be the perfect recipient of some race prep here. And if Markus Reiterberger's 2015 championship title is anything to go by, then it's fair to say that his Van Zon-Remeha team have done a cock-on job.

The big changes to the motor are all at the top end, where tweaks to the head gasket (allowing an upped compression ratio, to 13.8:1), cams, air box and exhaust (a full titanium Akrapovic system is used) are all allowed. The IDM bike uses the new BMW race ECU with the Calibration Kit Pro to configure the electronics. Internal changes are allowed to the fork, thus the use of the TTX 25 closed Öhlins cartridge here, while the rear unit can be replaced, in this instance with the almost ubiquitous Öhlins TTX 36 unit.

This is where things start to get interesting. The IDM bike now feels like a real race bike, with the bike set-up on its nose and relying on the electronics to tidy any waywardness at the rear. The first half a lap found me turning in too early everywhere, because once you start to initiate the turn, that's it, it's done it already. The front is much



There's more to keep the techs busy here...



Agility has just been upped

less forgiving, too, the Öhlins cartridges fitted offering real resilience to the forces applied when braking. And as such, it all feels far more together. Alright, the geometry may feel a little extreme to begin with, but pitching it on its nose, especially with the finesse of the Öhlins added, is how a bike should feel on track, especially one this twisty.

Down geared, and an appreciable four kilos lighter, it really jumps out of turns and sixth was

easily hit down the straight before hauling it up through the standard calipers. Here, you can tell the bike is front biased, with the rear really wanting to boogie out back. So with this, more florid wheelies and less intervention through the electronics, the bike feels magnificent; a real tool. The fuelling is better; still sharp, but playable enough not to feel intimidated when you ask for the full 205bhp. How can this get any better?

Power:	205bhp @13,500rpm
Front suspension:	Standard fork with Öhlins TTX25 cartridge
Rear suspension:	Öhlins TTX36 shock
Brakes:	Standard caliper, 320mm Motomaster discs
Tare weight:	176kg



Time to shine...

EWC: Penz13.com BMW S 1000 RR

I was looking forward to the next bike the most – the Penz13.com world endurance machine. Endurance warriors are often set-up to be purposefully easy to ride, to give pilots as easy a time as possible over the course of 24-hours of racing. And given the fact it's still massively powerful and was set for 800 laps of 200mph down the Mistral straight in a fortnight's time, my hopes for the bike were more than met.

A massive yeehah suffices for a riding impression. It's a bike you immediately get on with – the bars are wide and the pegs low, meaning you've got loads of room and big levers to direct the bike with. It's the first bike with a big, encompassing screen, so you look through this down the straights, as opposed to perching your head above it as on the bikes up to now.

Though in theory the bike is compromised for



The hardest worker of the lot...

How much do you want for it?



Power:	215bhp @ 14,200rpm
Front suspension:	Öhlins FGR300 fork
Rear suspension:	Öhlins TTX shock
Brakes:	Forged Brembo calipers
Tare weight:	172kg
Tank capacity:	24 litres

endurance, it still offers tremendous accuracy, with the wide bars enabling you to have all the control without any of the flightiness of the IDM bike. It feels balanced, front to back, so there's no need to worry about the rear penduluming around under braking, nor any slight weave down the straights that the IDM bike was guilty of.

The overwhelming feel of the bike is that it's fun. Utilising the clutchless downshift, with so much room on board, you can really start to take liberties – until the TC cuts in sharply and there's that eerie silence and stalled momentum that precedes a highside. TC settings are always set high for nummy journo's, and it was only this

moment that let me physically know that the tyre was tired – as was I after three bikes on the bounce. Tommy Bridewell rode the bike at the Suzuka 8-hour race and confirmed a little of what I found with the bike, "With the electronics there, you do feel like you're riding around with a safety net. You can dial it down, obviously, and the system broke at Suzuka in the race – and you didn't half notice it then after getting used to riding it. I reverted back to BSB mode then. And it's comfortable too, even at Suzuka in the heat you get off it and you feel fresh, but you couldn't do an hour on the BSB bike and feel the same." Three laps was enough for me to get a sweat on...



"Fill her up and I'll see you in an hour..."

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Head to www.bmw-motorrad-motorsport.com where there's a wealth of info on the program.



At least the bike's composed...

Power:	220bhp @ 14,300rpm
Compression ratio:	14.8:1
Electronics:	Motec electronics kit
Front suspension:	K-Tech KTR-3 DDS fork
Rear suspension:	K-Tech DDS Pro RCU
Brakes:	Brembo forged calipers, 320mm Brembo discs
Tare weight:	169kg
Tank capacity:	23.9 litres



"That's it, playtime's over!"

BSB: Tyco BMW S 1000 RR

Tommy Bridewell's bike was waiting for me after a quickly downed bottle of water. I'd collared him earlier to ask whether I should be intimidated about a bike that produces 217bhp and possesses no traction control. The Wiltshire swear box reckoned it would be alright, even though he'd high-sided himself into next week three days before at Oulton. "It's not going to bite your head off, I think you'll find it's just an out and out race bike. That's the good thing about BSB, it is all down to the rider. Chassis-wise, you'll feel a difference with the headstock angle changed and all that, but she will get on. You'll get on it and I guarantee you'll go 'fuuucking hell...' because it's trying to wheelie it's head off, trying to get loose at the back, and trying to use all it's power to get you out of the turn. It'll be alright!" Thanks Tommy...

The first thing that hits me is how distinctive the seat is. Designed to push you right over the Kraut's snout, it offers a really weird riding sensation. The next thing is the lack of the autoblipper. BSB rules forbid this, with all teams running the Motec ECU that doesn't factor this little luxury in. It caught me out going into T2 immediately, meaning I didn't have time to shift it into second for the turn. No matter, because this thing offers creamy drive, even in figures well south of 10,000rpm. Rev it higher, however, and it leaps out of turns, but still in a controllable and confident manner. Much of that confidence comes from the Pirelli slick that offers great grip, front and rear, and I notice by the second lap I'm running wider arcs – probably not how it should be ridden, but more enjoyable for it.

At my pace, there's no need for traction control, and the unadulterated hit of power is stunning. I love the fact it wheelies out of a turn, and this helps over a few of the kerbs, leaving just the big rear tyre to finish off the cornering for me. If there was one bike that the whinge of journos (the collective noun) grumbled about, it was this one, but I loved it. Because of the lack of leccy interference you feel the master of it – and there's enough manners within to not



A work of art in every respect



feel like the bike is taking over proceedings.

Almost as light as these bikes get, the feeling from standard as you initiate the lean is miles from where we are now. I have to stand it up a few times so as not to run the inside kerb, but once I learn to leave it later it leans like you wouldn't believe. I thought I'd explored all the kneedown spots on the track so far. But the Tyco machine finds new places to scuff the slider and get into the groove.

The penultimate left sees the bike in its

stride. Carrying more speed, more lean and feeling every ripple affect the bike's poise, but in a good way, I could spend all day on this bike going round one of the most intimidating corners on the world scene. Were it not for the fact I wouldn't be allowed on the next bike, I would have quite happily sneaked in another lap or two, such was the adrenalin release the bike offered. "Did you like that, then," asks Tommy when I get off. I think my grin the size of Valencia's straight said it all...



A never been on an also ran!

WSB: Ayrton Badovini's BMW Motorrad Italia S 1000 RR

Having thought I'd got a handle on all the Beemers of the day (including Guy Martin's road racer that we featured last month), I jumped onto Ayrton Badovini's WSB racer thinking that I knew what was in store for me. How wrong I was. This is a different animal altogether...

I'll admit that the star prize for us journo was riding Guy Martin's road race machine, and BMW billed the bike in similar fashion. But let's not forget that Badovini's bike is a full-on WSB-spec machine. The problem being that I did forget.

Up to now, each bike had got a little bit less cuddly the more focused it became. The jump to this WSB bike, however, was like going from a stick to an AK-47. The riding position is so extreme, the stiffness of it almost scaffold like and the engine, well, it's like when a Polaris missile pops its head above water and then just fucks off into the sky. Except it wasn't the sky where the bike was heading, rather Valencia's second turn.

When I shut off for it I absolutely crapped myself. A bang so loud that it vibrated through my body was emitted from somewhere below me. I looked down expecting to see a piston trying to do an uppercut to my chin, but nothing had poked out and the bike was still running, very well too as I negotiated myself round the turn. Then going into turn three it did it again. Bang, like a firework had just gone off six inches from your solar plexus. I now started to put two and two together to work out that this was a result of the fancy air bleed system the bike uses under braking. It seemed to work too, as the bike was supremely stable while on the anchors – just with the 4th July going on around you.

So that's what the engine is doing when the throttle's shut, what about when it's open? Well, it's just as extreme, except accompanied by the sweetest of inline four screams rather than a soundtrack from a



WEIGHT

Stripped of everything unnecessary and using lightweight materials where allowed (the forged wheels are fantastic) the bike hits the scales at just 169kg.

blanket bombing campaign. Though the gearbox is harder work, Badovini's preference through the 'shifter pressure, the ratios are set perfectly for Valencia's second and third gear turns, and I also hit sixth down the straight with Gawd knows how many kph on the clocks – I daren't look.

I wouldn't look anyway due to a lack of mental capacity, but I have to deal with the weave that the pointy profiled WSB slicks and extreme geometry are creating – meaning that there's not even a break on the straight bits of the circuit. There's also noticeably less grunt lower down. I can't ride this like I've been riding the other bikes, I have to keep revs way above 10,000rpm and get it beyond 14k where the power peaks.

I figure all this out within a lap and spend the next two looking for perfection – that's my perfection, not Badovini's. I reckon I come close to it, working out that I can nearly park it and get off mid-corner because

there's so much grip from the Pirelli and so much feedback from the Öhlins forks. I exaggerate curves even more so than on the BSB bike just because I can, the tight inner turns of the circuit offering ample opportunity to feel like a superstar.

The rear then swats off the power I dare to apply, leaving the electronics barely engaged as I gas as harder than I've ever done exiting a corner. In truth, I don't feel my progress is impeded in any way at all, such is the completeness of engine and electronics packages. You'd have to be way above my pay scale to get them rescuing you from any errant input. Even if the team has put the setting to 'numpty', this level on the WSB electronics suite is way above the standard stuff – in Venn diagram terms they'd be mutually exclusive...

Where before I'd back off, I'm now pushing on, and this is the sign of a great bike. I know the bike's limits are out of sight,

FUEL

To get it through a race the tank has been enlarged to fit 23.9 litres of petrol in.

ELECTRONICS

The Italia bike uses BMW's Calibration Kit Pro, and rules state that BMW must make 50 kit systems available (ECU, dash, software, sensors) for under €8,000 (it's €7,600). The system offers corner to corner mapping.

ENGINE

The team modifies the cylinder head and lightens the crankshaft, adds a new camshaft, cam sprockets, titanium con rods and Mahle pistons. Compression ratio is quoted at 14.0:1 with power said to be 'over 220bhp'. The engine is a full titanium Akrapovic system.

SUSPENSION

The toppest of top spec Öhlins FGR300 forks are used up front with a TTX36 shock employed at the rear.

BRAKES

The Brembo forged calipers are twinned to 328mm discs. Badovini uses a thumb brake at the rear.

meaning that I can tip-toe out of my comfort zone – bricking it going into turn one, gritting my teeth into turn 13 and I'm contemplating changing my riding style to get my elbow down in the infield. It's a bike that can do all of this, but when it's properly employed it can also meet every manufacturer in the WSB paddock head on.

This arena, however, is where the HP Race Program stumbles. Results prove this, as do a lack of customers wanting to race the RR at the very top level – the team won't run the bike in 2016. One privateer bike with results that aren't bothering the front guys as often as hoped implies that BMW's model doesn't offer unilateral success. Where its deficiencies lie is unclear to me after three laps. It would still be unclear after three million, but what's beyond doubt that this is the most complete, the most angry, the most capable and most fearsome BMW ever built – and it has the fireworks to go with it...

BMW MOTORRAD RACE TROPHY

This is what anyone riding a BMW can enter. The rules, well, they're not that easy to fathom out given that there are all sorts of different types of racing going on. But with a €100,000 prize fund, there's a lot up for grabs – the winner gets €20k, with other prizes up for grabs and the team also able to win cash. The current leader is Roland Resch who races in the Alpe Adria series in based around many Eastern European tracks. Congratulations!

That's the smile of a man €20,000 richer!



WORDS: ROOTSY
PICS: JONNY GAWLER

SIZE n

It's not the size of the Panigale in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the Panigale as the 899 takes on the 1299 S in a race across Iberia...

With Ducati about to release its latest middleweight to the world, the Panigale 959, we thought it time to look into the latest craze that's sweeping the world of motorcycling. First it was underseat pipes, then the Harlem Shuffle was somehow everywhere, and now it's a phenomenon known as capacity creep.

Of all the manufacturers out there, it's Ducati that's most famous for this cubic expansion. Having gone from producing the 600SS and 750SS, the Italian factory then made the delicious 748 before indulging in the 749 – a small jump in title, though a non-existent one in capacity. Racing decreed that supersport twins be no bigger than 750cc, so that's where we all thought capacity would stop, but there's no accounting for Ducati's out-of-the-box thinking...

Next came the 848 in the same mould as the 1098. Not content with the capacity of its bike there, the 899 Panigale was made to completely crush what little opposition was out there. We're now in a situation where

matters



*Last one to the ferry
gets the beers in...*



Magic carpets rides have never looked so spectacular

■ Ducati's soon to be launched middleweight bike has a bigger engine size than its iconic superbike of the 1990s. And it's only a thimbleful short of the size of its 999 relative. The 899's big bro, the 1199 Panigale also got a boost this year, with capacity now topping out at a whopping 1,285cc in new 1299 form. Where will it all end? Two litre twins?

But before we get our hands on the 959, and what a mouth watering prospect that is, we thought it best to consider capacity in a real world sense. When small bikes are getting so big, does size really matter? What extra are you getting from the 1299? Or is the 899 the perfect package? Without hesitation, we'd have no hesitation in recommending the bigger of almost any two bikes. But we stop and scratch our heads when it comes to this pair of Panigales for a few reasons.

The first is that the 899 Panigale is a brilliant road bike. Forget that there's a bigger brother waiting in the wings and relish the sublime manners and easy ergonomics that makes any ride dreamy. Add to that, it looks

utterly beautiful, oozes class and not even the double sided swinger or unsexy and un-Swedish suzzies deters from this becoming the object of your desire. It was our New Bike of the Year last year, and it's easy to see why.

Why so down on the 1299 then? We're not at all. It's not a b-mazing bike, it's an a-mazing one, and a genuine step ahead of the 1199 version it replaces, no more so than on the road. It's packed with savvy and relevant tech, blessed with instinctive ergonomics and is even more achingly beautiful than the 899 what with its golden adornments on this S model. And what about that engorged motor? If we're talking about going big, then Ducati is taking two spoonfuls in making the Superquadro motor even more super and, even more quadro.

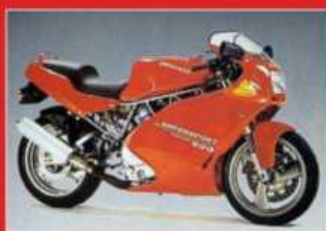
So Ducati has two great bikes on its hands, making the choice between the pair an almost impossible task. To make that judgement a little easier, we decided to go on a road test. But not just a quick blast round the roads of your local dealer. Seeing as we had both bikes

at our big SBOTY test, we thought a race was in order to get from the gently lapping shores of the Med to the more imposing swell of the Bay of Biscay. Going from the brilliant apartments that have been built just behind Portimao to the ferry at Santander was going to take a long day in the saddle, especially when we were traversing Iberia on roads that the Romans hadn't got to. But by the end of it, we hoped to declare a clear winner in this capacity competition.

Setting the alarm for a half five in the morning departure was an unnatural act, especially since the days before had seen us lap Portimao 300 times – we felt like dogs that hadn't drunk water for a week. We'd packed the truck (well, watched Paul pack it), and then wolfed a mediocre pizza down our necks before hitting the hay at midnight. Aching? I've felt better after high-siding my brains out. I must be getting old...

However, the prospect of spending the day in one of two Ducati saddles wasn't as daunting as it would have been in the pre-

A short history of sub-1000cc Ducati sportsbikes



583CC: 600 SS (1993-1996)

The name of the 600SS promises more than what it delivers – the air cooled lump ensuring that mega speeds aren't reached.



748CC: 750 PASO (1986-1998)

Ducati's version of the future, and the factory's first salvos against the Japanese. The Paso was out there design-wise, but was no racer...



748CC: 750SS (1991-2002)

Again, like the 600SS the 750 SuperSport version looked the business, but an air cooled motor was never going to cut it.



Not so easy does it...



Panigale era. Had this trip been on an 848 and a 10 or 1198 then the bargaining would have started long ago to bags a coveted spot in the 55mph truck. Buttock unfriendly, desperately cramped and a nightmare on the wrists, these machines were thoroughbreds – in the sense that they didn't appreciate going for a hack across the countryside, rather than the longed for track where they could open their legs and show everyone their class...

But the same can't be said of this pair of Panigales. After securing the Kriega luggage on the Ducatis' miniscule tails, it was then time for a sharp intake of breath as I swung an aching leg over the 1299 before the sun had even hit the Portuguese sky. Settling into the red machine, the bars weren't as far a stretch as I feared they'd feel, nor the climb to the pegs so vertiginous as to pronounce immediate pain from my contracted quads.

About an hour away lay our first photo location, recce'd by the boys on the way down. It's a hilly area, and with the sun not yet high enough to appear over the peaks of



Analogue suspension still offers ample ability on road



748CC: 748 (1994 – 2003)

A 916 but with a smaller motor, this is the classic Ducati middleweight superbike. Insane agility and looks that would make a grown man cry.



748CC: 749 (2003 – 2006)

The new little bike spawned from the 999 still had racing aspirations, but would be Ducati's last entrant in supersport racing.



848CC: 848 (2008 – 2013)

Ducati's new direction – sod racing, let's just build a brilliant bike! We just can't imagine this machine with a smaller lump inside it...



851CC: 851 (1987 – 1992)

With a liquid cooled engine, fuel injection and decent ancillaries, this was a big move forward for Ducati in a true sporting sense.



The ride home was almost as good as two days on track



Time to fuel up...

the hills, the pace of the ride reflected the hour. Both the bikes and the riders were wiping sleepy dust from our eyes...

Encountering every type of surface imaginable, from billiard table smooth to a dirt track at the end of a wrong turn, the 1299, still shod on its racy Bridgestone R10 rubber, shrugged everything off. That's what happens when a riding position instils confidence – you don't tense up when a corner's strewn with muck, you know the bike will dance through a turn that tightens, and panic remains a dormant reaction when a school bus taking up both lanes presents itself as you approach a corner. Said bus was clearly used to owning the road at this hour, but a gentle squeeze of the brakes – that stunned the day before on track – now offered a cultured slow, while the Panigale's bars were easily persuaded to thread the rest of the bike through the needle's eye that the bus offered as a thoroughfare.

I'm a morning person, so thankfully alert early doors. This extended beyond bus dodging to me scrolling through the options on the colourful dash and softening



888CC: 888 (1991 – 1993)

The upgrade to the 851, this was the forerunner to the most iconic Ducati of all – the 916 – but still a belting bike and WSB racer in its own right.



898CC: PANIGALE 899 (2014-2015)

The current big boy in the little boy class, the capacity of the petit Panigale is about to grow even larger in the next version...



904CC: PASO 906 (1989 – 1990)

Another instance of the name not linking up to the number, the bigger Paso was manna from heaven for those with a plastic fetish.



904CC: 900SS (1988 – 2007)

A stalwart in the Ducati line-up for years, the 900SS went through many guises and offered an introduction to the firm's more serious stuff.



The 899 needs senses to be heightened

While the 1299 S deals with absolutely everything...



Lugged up and still hungry for action, while Rootsy is just hungry for breakfast...

everything up just before we set off. I wasn't after the full hit of Pani' power, traction control barely intervening, the stiff response of its track Smart EC suspension settings or zero intrusion from the Bosch ABS system. Rather, I wanted a softer power delivery, a more relaxed ride and all the electronic help the Ducati could muster.

The outgoing 1199 model would have baulked at the rev counter barely pushing past 7,000rpm down the straights, coughing and clattering away, but in 1299 guise short shifting is back en vogue. Testing the new and the old full bore bikes in North Wales earlier in the year highlighted the differing characteristics of a machine that nominally looks the same – but they don't go the same.

We reached the proscribed curves and set forth into battle. To get your head in the zone for photographs you have to rev the bike harder, and this is where you start to get your money's worth and where the motor reverts to that powerbanded ginormous v-twin that you've forked out over £20k for. But whereas before you were taking your life into your own hands with the old analogue suspension,

the upgrade to semi-reactive units on the 1299 offers a stunning improvement. Once you get your braking done, its action shortening the wheelbase and getting the bike turned, the control offered by the electronic Öhlins is sublime. Gone is the plank-with-wheels feeling of the 1199, replaced with a lithe, balanced, comfortable and confidence inspiring tool that only encourages you to go faster, lean more, or both. This, I fear, is the winning hand for the 1299 over its sycophantic 899 brother, as to recreate this feel requires a suspension expert perched on the pillion seat, reaching over and making tens of tiny adjustments each time Jonny's Nikon lens follows my path through a corner.

Brimming with Öhlins inspired confidence on now sizzling rubber, it was the turn of the 899 to perform for the camera. Bereft of the expensive electronic suzzies, the Showa BPFs and Sachs combo initially feel the equal of the Öhlins on the charge up to the corner, but as soon as you tip in you realise that all they can offer is a static compromise. This concession worked tremendously at Portimao over the two days prior, but over the course of 30

metres through the meat of the same corner I'd just been round on the 1299 the weakness of traditional suspension was cruelly exposed. Turn in feels laboured and less certain, previously unfelt bumps now sap confidence, the tyres feel like the weight of the world is on them, and a little drop off on exit now requires me to absorb it through my legs. Don't get me wrong, I get into the groove quickly, and love the way the engine and chassis blend so well, but the staggering road holding of before is now a distant memory.

There are other benefits of the smaller bike, however. Its diminutive size allows a rider to feel in control and the power available to you never overwhelms or intimidates. Braking forces are less extreme as the 899 simply isn't able to offer the stupendous thrust of the two pistons pounding away inside the 1299, likewise the rear isn't overawed by the mid-120bhp asked for on exit. That means it's not naturally a pitchy bike that saps any stresses you might have otherwise have felt. The use of the 180-section rear also means that, in conjunction with the wide bars, you can get yourself stuck into a corner in no time – 🏍️



916CC: 916 (1994 – 1998)

A sublime amalgamation of v-twin performance and drop-dead gorgeous looks; this is Ducati's calling card. A bit small now, mind!



996CC: 996 (1999-2002)

The obvious upgrade to the 916 to homologate it to compete in racing. The difficult middle child? Nah, still a classic that's splendid to ride.



998CC: 998 (2002 – 2004)

A truly stunning creation offering nearly a full litre of v-twin power as well as the classic looks that we'd all grown to adore.



998CC: 999 (2003 – 2007)

Keeping the same capacity as the 998, the new 999 divided opinion like no other bike. In R mode the engine changed radically and grew to 999cc.

TECH DATA



Ducati Panigale 899

Ducati Panigale 1299 S

ENGINE	Type	898cc, l/c, 8v, DOHC, v-twin	1,285cc, l/c, 8v, DOHC, v-twin
	Bore x Stroke	100 x 57.2mm	116 x 60.8mm
	Compression	12.5:1	12.6:1
	Fuelling	EFI, single injector, 62mm throttle bodies	EFI, dual injectors, 67mm throttle bodies
	Tested Power	125bhp @ 10,200rpm	181.4bhp @ 10,500rpm
	Tested Torque	92Nm @ 8,750rpm	130.2Nm @ 8,750rpm
ELECTRONICS	RBW/Riding Modes	Yes/three	Yes/three
	Traction Control	Yes/eight levels	Yes/eight levels
	ABS	Yes	Yes
	Quickshifter	Yes	Yes
	Wheelie Control	No	No
CHASSIS	Launch Control	No	No
	Frame	Monocoque aluminium	Monocoque aluminium
	F Suspension	Showa 43mm BPF, fully adj.	Öhlins Smart EC NIX30 43mm forks
	R Suspension	Sachs horizontal shock, fully adj.	Öhlins Smart EC TTX36 shock.
	Front Brakes	Four piston Brembo M32 calipers, 320mm discs	Four piston Brembo M50 calipers, 330mm discs
DIMENSIONS	Rear Brakes	Two piston caliper, 245mm disc	Two piston caliper, 245mm disc
	Wheelbase	1,426mm	1,437mm
	Rake/Trail	24.0 degrees/96mm	24.0 degrees/96mm
	Seat Height	830mm	830mm
	Kerb Weight	169kg	166.5kg
PRICE	Fuel Capacity	17 litres	17 litres
	Price	£12,825	£21,050
	From	Ducati UK 00800 00382284 www.ducatiuk.com	Ducati UK 00800 00382284 www.ducatiuk.com

the 200-section on the 1299 takes that little bit more levering... There's the EBC braking control system on the little bike, but at road speeds this is barely noticeable. Of course, all the electronic intelligence of the Öhlins dispenses with having to get a bike set-up to feel this good, but I'd rather have a sound dynamic package underneath a layer of zeros and ones than not. Thanks largely to the swingarm, the 1299 is the lighter bike, though with just three kilos in it it's hard to notice this miniscule 1.5 per cent difference.

The power of the 899 curls the edge of your mouth as you exit, but it's the euphoric shove of the big bike's acceleration that really puts a smile on your face. It soon becomes clear why a wheelie control system is in the 1299's armoury as containing 130Nm of torque in a wheelbase of just 1,437mm is simply not possible. Reverting to the old fashioned clutching it up method is the only way you'll get a wheelie out of the 899 – other than pinning it from a standstill.

In any situation where a stab of power is needed, the 1299 creams it. This wouldn't have been the case at low revs with the 1199, but the bored out bike now works far more linearly than before. Dodgy overtake on the 899? You need to start playing with the 'box, my friend. The 899 shares the same internal

ratios as the big bike, though has five more teeth on the rear sprocket to try and even things up. Even so, the step up to the 1299 is easy in this regard, the step back down, however, well, that's when problems arise...

Because the engines are such integral elements to the bikes, what with bits bolted on to them and the motors acting like a frame in many ways, there is an obvious similarity to the ride. That meant that swapping bikes over the course of the day was simply a case of going from white to red. At motorway speeds, on decent back roads, the pair eat up the miles, and do so in relative comfort. There's a lot of room on board each bike, and even the seats are liveable. The 1299 slurps its fuel quicker, but that's what you'd expect, and if you back the pace off, like just after a shit Spanish sandwich at siesta-time, even the 1299 records something resembling economy.


Switching constantly between each bike on the way north, as the signs for Santander showed up I was still at a loss as to which bike I'd buy. The case for the bigger bike is strong, as rightly it should be. Even without the trinkets the motor alone is a nuclear reaction somehow contained within the crankcases. You'd think that the finesse would come from the clever suspension, but the motor proves there's elegance there too. On

track, there's no question. The 1299 is The Daddy. Around Portimao it was nothing short of amazing, and it left the 899 for dead.

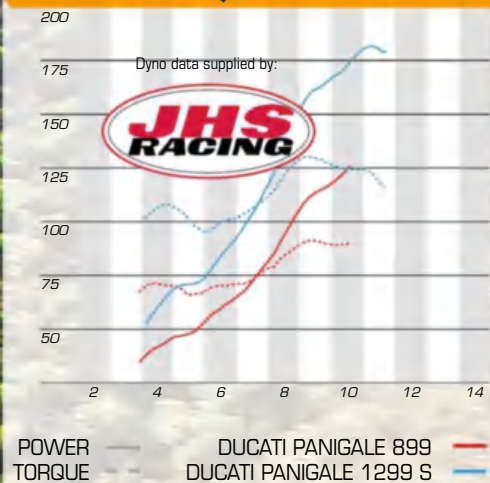
Around shorter tracks it's a slightly different story, but the ending always remains the same.

On road? That's where the 899 excels. Capacity creep means that it's relevant, aping the bigger bike means it looks resplendent, and the price difference between the two bikes, getting on for eight grand (five if you talking about the stock 1299) means the 899 is reasonable money – in this context.

We reach the Brittany Ferry terminal and in the queue a start doing some sums, trying to justify the £21,050 1299 over the £12,825 899. Power-wise, it works out at £102 per bhp for the 899 and £116 for the 1299. With regard to torque, it's £139 per Nm for the 899, £162 for the 1299. Lap times round Portimao? £104 per second for the 899, £178 for the 1299. So if you're talking value, the 899 offers it in bucketloads. Proportionally, it's the better bike – by a long way – but the standard 1299 (at £17,025) shows the big bike in a better light.

But there's something about having a little extra in your pocket – and the 1299 S has deep pockets and long arms when it comes to dynamic generosity. It always gives more – be it power or control – whether you use all that's on offer is down to your right hand... 

POWER AND TORQUE



Whoops, wrong way...

Little out-does large here!



Shame on you, big bike!

Big vs Small

Are there any options where the bigger bike isn't better?

There aren't many smaller bikes that out-do their bigger brethren – even with the savings factored in. On pure performance grounds, we'd plump for the

lithe Triumph Street Triple over the bloated Speed. We'd give serious thought to a GSX-R750 over a 1000 version. We'd also have a BMW F 800 GS over the 1200 version. Factor

money into the equation and a few more options spring up – like a Kawasaki Z800 over a Z1000 and the Brutale 800 against the inline four 1000cc versions. But that's about it!



WORDS: BENJAMIN J KUBAS CRONIN PICS: SUTER RACING

ESKIL SUTER

When it comes to Suter Racing, it's a name many of you race fans will have heard of. That's because the outfit produces many chassis for Grand Prix machines, as well as undertaking other engineering projects not always to do with bikes. The gentleman behind the company, Eskil Suter, is certainly a man of many talents and, of course, an ex-racer himself.

We wanted to speak with him about the Suter MMX 500 though (or the World Legends Suter 500 depending on who you're talking to), because its reveal has simply blown our minds. However, it's worth diving into a little bit of Suter's history before we sink our teeth into the MMX proper. Over to you, Eskil.

"I had a very nice childhood where we had a little workshop, so I was working on motorbikes from a young age. I had my first dirtbike before I was ten and started racing motocross. Finally, I had a couple of accidents

and problems with my knees and I changed to road racing in 1989. I won the Swiss title in the first year, and then later I was second in the European series behind Max Biaggi. Then I went to race in the Grand Prix 250 class. I was looking at racing a 500 but because of little sponsorship I was forced to race the 250s until 1996. Then I decided to stop. I was more a rider for big bikes, my body size and weight was a handicap on a 250, but I was still able to arrive in the top ten. In 1998 I was a test rider for the 500cc Swissauto MZ machine, replacing Dorian Romboni for eight 500GPs, which was an amazing experience. I will never forget the feeling that kind of bike can give you. Then a few years later the two-stroke was banned from racing, everything went to four-stroke, and since that day I've always thought it would be nice to have a 500 again. Plus, the factory 500s were never to be bought by the public, only returned to Japan

or to collectors. But there wasn't one available for a real enthusiast, or a hobby racer."

So you decided to create one then, Eskil?

"We found there was a huge interest around the world in the 500 still, and we had a lot of old technology lying around from back in 1998 and 1999 from the MZ500. In 1999 that bike got two pole positions on a chassis I designed. We also designed the cylinder and exhaust systems, and from my two-stroke time there was a lot of knowledge about the engine in our company. Finally we decided to build a V4, yes, because of the interest, but also you need something other than the daily business, a kind of hobby that makes you happy, having some fun. We started a couple of years ago but knew we could not spend all our time on it, so built it in our spare time. But now we have a really nice bike, a strong and reliable base which we want to offer to the public, hobby racers and to the World GP legends series."



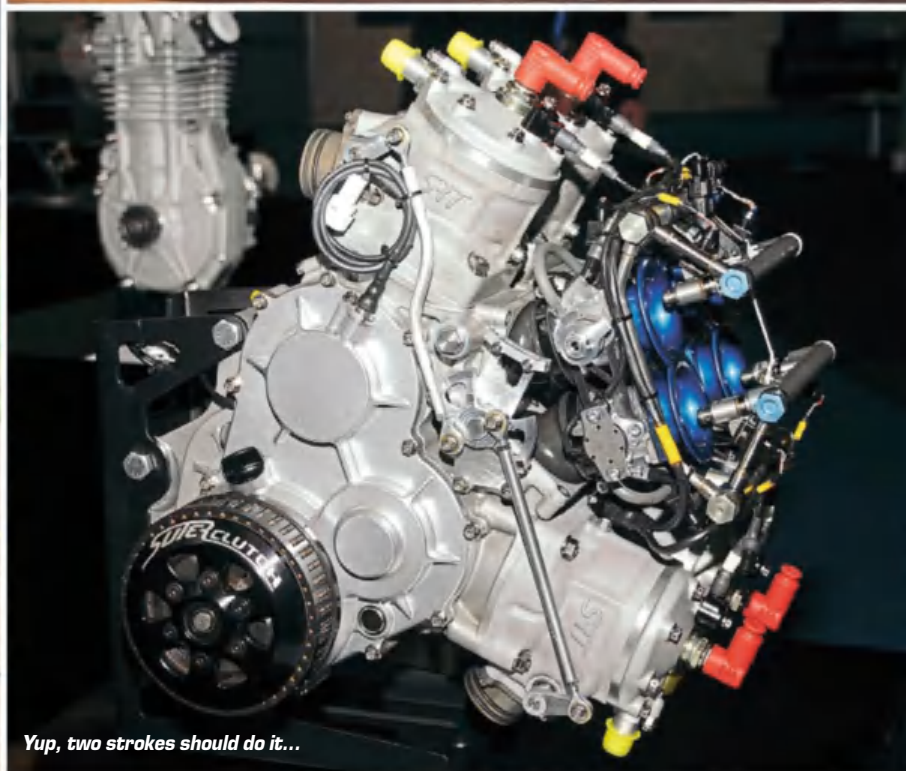
The man behind the astonishingly cool Suter MMX 500 sits down for a chat about his incredible creation

And of course you worked with the Foggy Petronas bunch, and others?

"Mainly we worked with Petronas, we developed the whole engine for Foggy's project, and also engine developments for cars and aeroplanes. We also build the Mahindra 250 Moto3 bike completely, so are more of a motorcycle manufacturer and developer than just making the chassis. OK, we did Moto2 as we could do a good job on one hand, but on the other we are not like Aprilia and other brands who hesitate to jump in because of the Honda engine. We have no such hesitation. And our CRT MotoGP bike was good, which we started because BMW wanted to enter MotoGP in the future. Their management changed, and they decided to pull out which was a shame as we were hoping for a good collaboration between us, but I understand their decisions. We also did lot of work with Kawasaki, and the Ilmor project 🏁"

SUTER MMX 500

Oh, I was supposed to make it disappear...



Yup, two strokes should do it...

This one is mine, right?





Swiss missile...

SUTER 500 factory V4



Excuse us, we've just...

but it is also very hard as a privateer to make a competitive MotoGP bike. With the budget, or a big manufacturer behind us, we could do it. In the 500cc times it was a little more easy as the two-stroke engine is less complex than the four. Our pole position 500 was run by a very small group against the factories. It shows a small group can make great results, but even then there wasn't enough budget to keep going, but we had proven we could go faster around the track."

And you also do green stuff, boats and planes?

"We do a lot of other stuff in Suter Racing; green technology, new energy sources and also some other new technologies that keeps us busy. Motorsports is one side, but it is up and down like usual, there is always a big fluctuation in this sport. We are always set up that we keep working all the time."

So then, the MMX500. It's actually got a 576cc engine. Why is that, for reliability?

"The thinking behind the capacity was to deliver the same feeling from the best two-stroke days, 200bhp with low weight. This is possible at 500cc, but the engine must be highly tuned and the torque curve is peaky. So we decided to go for a single cylinder volume of 140/145cc to create more torque, to make it smoother, but still to deliver the power. Also, reliability is increased, you do not need to go to the edge with tuning. We can do a 200bhp 500cc easily, but then it needs more servicing, new pistons, and so on. With our capacity you are not changing them every two days! We are continuing to test at the moment, but there is still some work to do and we start production very soon on the first bikes to be delivered next June."

You also run a double crank-shaft like Yamaha used to, rather than a single?

"Yamaha and Suzuki ran counter-rotating shafts, yes, and Honda had a single. A two-stroke crankshaft is a delicate thing, especially



Eskil - the man can still ride!



Hop on, baby!

if you go for a single as it needs more action to keep the service life low. With the counter-rotating shaft there are two advantages; you have very low vibration, so no need for a balancer shaft, and centrifugal mass is more or less eliminated by each shaft which helps the handling and gave an advantage to the Yamaha 500, if you remember?"

We do, but they didn't run fuel-injection then, but now you are on your bike.

"Yes, more or less the carburettor is out dated now, and with today's CPUs you can run a system not possible a decade ago. In the two-stroke you have a limited time to deliver the fuel, every stroke. With a four-stroke you have a bit more time. This was the main problem in the past, but now it is possible. I can tell you the fuelling so far is amazing, you can map every corner and every position of the throttle, at any rpm from a base map you are running. There are knocking sensors that will inject more fuel if there is any detection of knocking, it's a self-correcting system."

Impressive! So, how's the throttle response?

"The throttle response is very good considering the short time we have had on track, it's much better than we expected and after more testing we will have a very nice response. It is ride-by-cable, not RBW, we wanted to go back to when the rider's hand was the traction-control. However, with the system we have on the bike there is the possibility for traction-control, wheelie control and all the gadgets. Firstly, though, we will make the bike feel good like it did in the old days. We will offer some electronics in the future, but our target is for a nice torque behaviour and already it does nice and smooth wheelies, so an average trackday rider will be able to use it without electronics. You still cannot crack the throttle fully mid-corner though! Tyres have moved on, too. I was already making big black marks around the



It's what the lottery was invented for...

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Head to www.suter500.com or www.legends500.com or www.worldgpbikelegends.com

corners and in the old days this was when you walked on the knife's edge! But not so much with modern tyres, they are much more forgiving and easy to use."

And two-strokes can be cleaner than a four, when injected properly, we hear?


"This is amazing. For instance, when you have the bike idling on carbs you always have some rpm fluctuation, with the injection it is stable and smooth at very low rpm. For sure with this track bike emissions are not important, but our idea is to work in the future on direct-injection and a catalytic converter, to offer a road legal MMX 500 to buyers. It's possible to make the engine cleaner than a four-stroke, and our idea is to start working on it sooner rather than later."

We're already saving, Eskil! It'll be good to see these bikes racing though?

"We called the 500cc time the 'golden era' of racing, the big battles with Roberts and Spencer, Rainey and Schwantz, and the idea is this bike gives you this feeling back, a feeling you can buy. It will also be good for the World GP Legends, too. We have the possibility of having the same bikes in old colours and the original bikes can be in the pits for fans to see. They see their heroes race on modern bikes but without the variation in specs, tyre size and so on, but still see the old bikes."

True. So, finally, have you got many orders?

"We already have a few orders for the MMX, but the interest is huge after our launch and we are positive there will soon be enough bikes to fill the grids. So we will continue to work on it, and maybe we let you ride it!"

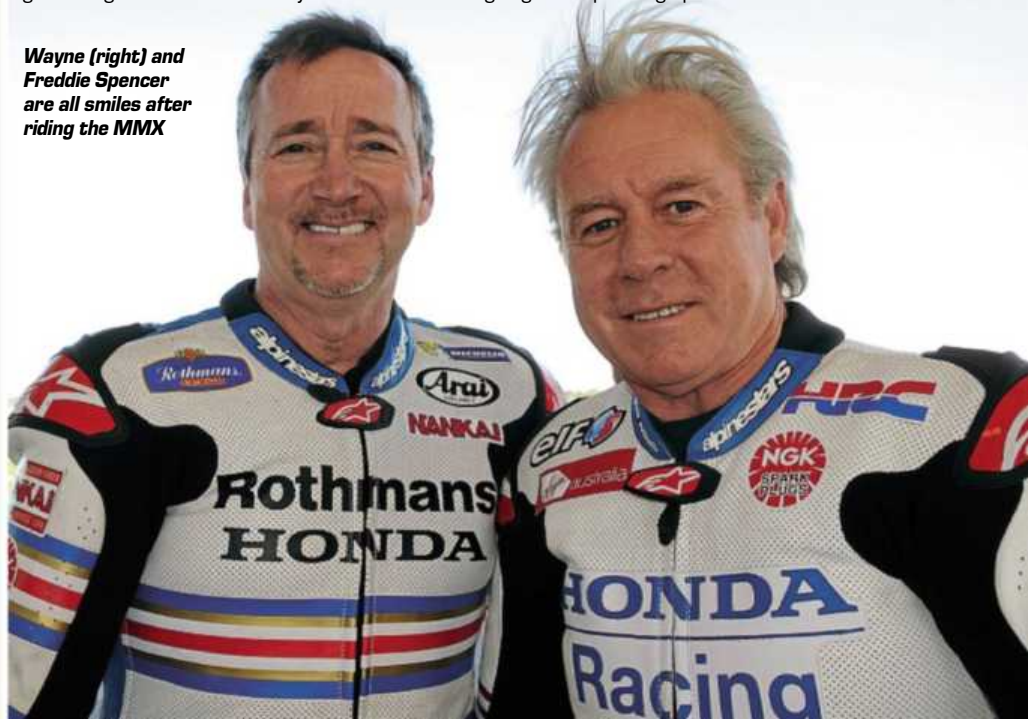
So then, that's the inside story about the MMX straight from the horse's mouth. We are so ridiculously excited about this bike that we'll be keeping a close eye on its progress and inclusion in WGPL races next year. Oh, and regarding that parting comment – we'll hold you to that, Eskil. Can't wait! 

WAYNE GARDNER – THE WORLD GP LEGENDS FRONTMAN (AND GP LEGEND) TALKS ABOUT THE NEW LEGENDS SUTER 500

Isn't the bike fantastic? Riding the original 500s is nice, but one of the problems we found at the first Legends event in Jerez was that they can be unreliable, and there's no real supply of new parts to keep them maintained. We can work around it a bit, but having a fresh bike with bigger tyres will lift the show a lot, and do a lot for our events. Hopefully we'll have a grid full of new 500s all painted up in classic colours so you can identify them. And we're all on equal bikes. At Jerez we were racing all sorts of bikes from different decades, which wasn't fair on some. But modern rubber will make a difference too and if we improve the bikes on the grid, it can only be a good thing. I love the Suter in my old Rothmans

colours, I thought it looked better than the original! I also love the fact that it can do 2,500kms before you change pistons. We used to do that every day! There will be two races, one for us old racers, and another for those who've bought a Suter, or similar, so there will be somewhere for owners to race them, or let one of us race it for you. If you buy one, you can nominate a racer, which should add a bit of kudos to it. The interest by the public is amazing, but also from current racers. In fact, I think the Suter has as good or a better a power-to-weight ratio than in MotoGP. I hope Rossi and Lorenzo, when they retire, come and join us, I reckon they're going to be queueing up at the door for this!

Wayne (right) and Freddie Spencer are all smiles after riding the MMX



addiction

ESKIL SUTER'S



WORDS: BENJAMIN J KUBAS CRONIN PICS: SUTER

SUTER MMX 500

After having a long chat with Mr Suter, it's time to sit down and drink in his beautiful creation...

"Of course, I used to race two-strokes, and also I raced with the 500 a few times. I always remember the sensation though, even now, that it was the best feeling on a bike I ever had. These bikes were at the very top, and who would not want to ride one, to feel what it is like, the most pure experience you can have on a track? We started this bike in our spare time, around our other work, but even in our line of work you must enjoy something more, something fun, and this is how the MMX 500 began..."

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SPECIFICATIONS

ESKIL SUTER'S SUTER MMX 500

ENGINE:

576cc, twin counter-rotating crank V4
56 x 58.5mm
Electronic fuel injection
Four-port throttle bodies
Electronic ECU
Carbon reed valves
Electronic 'double' power valves
Akrapovic titanium exhausts
Suter dry clutch
Six-speed cassette gearbox
2D data-logging
195bhp @ 13,000rpm

CHASSIS:

Aluminium twin-spar, multi-adjustable
Aluminium swingarm
Öhlins fork and shock, multi-adjustable
Oz magnesium (or aluminium) wheels
Brembo four-piston front calipers
Carbon fibre tank and bodywork

SUTERacing
Suter Racing Technology AG

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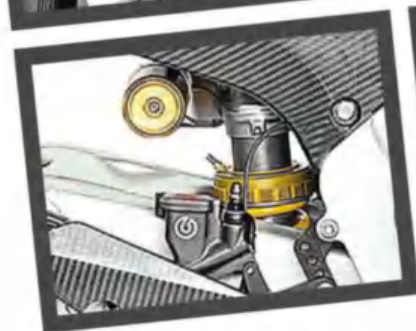
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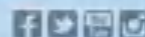
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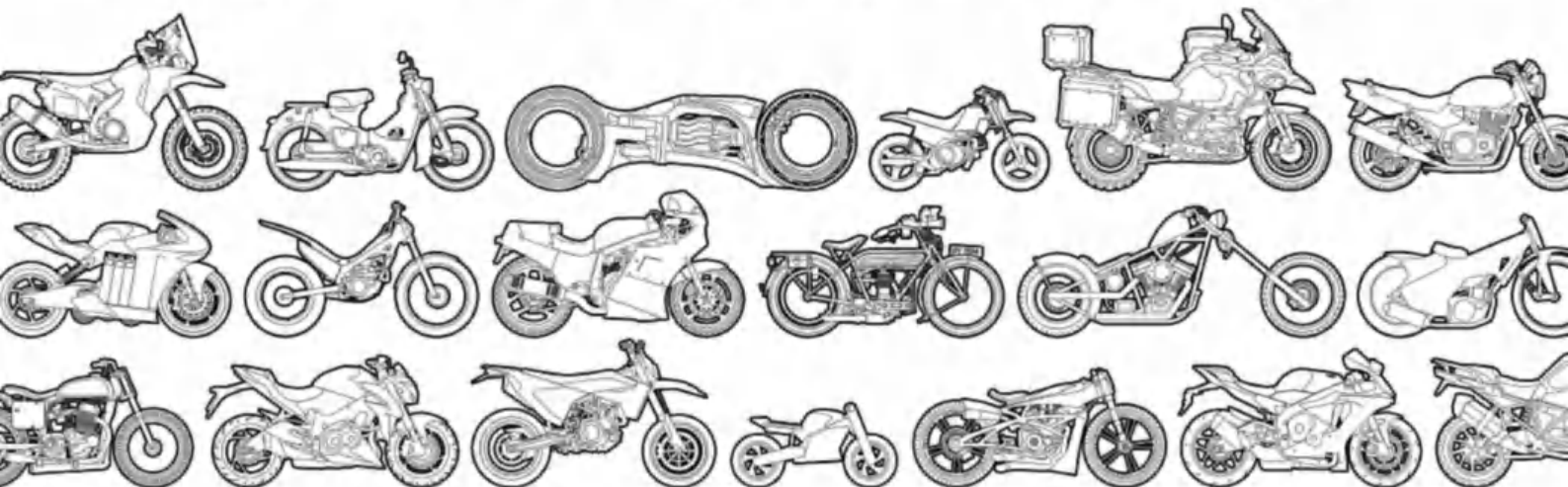
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GETTING YOUR KNEE DOWN

This is a big biking cherry to pop – but one which is so, so easy to try too hard at. Work on your riding technique and scuffed sliders will happen so easily you'll wonder what the fuss was about...

WORDS: JON 'JP' PEARSON

IMAGES: JOE DICK, FB ARCHIVE

There's obviously a point in every rider's biking life where they haven't held that most sacred of trophies in their hand – their own scuffed knee slider, defaced by that slider/surface interface. This biking rite of passage can be a barrier that some find hard – nigh on impossible – to leap over. But when you finally do, as some know, it's one of the greatest biking barriers to be broken.

Sure, many FB readers will say, "Pffft, I did that years ago." But remember, you were there too once – and even then there's no shortage of riders who can get their knee on the deck, but look as sketchy as a cartoon doing it. This guide is about working on your riding technique and cornering skills to get the basics right, and in doing so getting your knee down can become a happy by-product.

But why would you want to get your knee down? That's easy. Ever since the days of Jarno Saarinen, Kenny Roberts and Barry Sheene racers have been getting their knee down on track (or the local roundabout) and, obviously, we want to copy them.

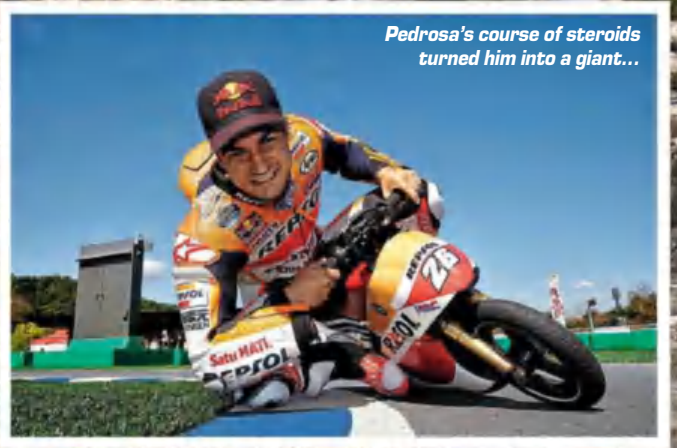
There are practical reasons for this ritual too – it's a gauge for where the ground is and your lean angle – but when you've never actually scuffed a slider these details are, well, just the boring bit.

Let's get down to the nitty gritty then and establish the basic rules of engagement before we plough into a corner. The aim is to bring the bike over and closer to the ground. It's not, I repeat not, just try and get your knee closer to the ground. This isn't about trying to stretch out and hang off your bike like a double-jointed rock climber.

The usual cornering rules apply, all we're going to do is make sure we hitch one bum cheek off the inside of the seat and poke a knee out a bit and with a tad more corner speed the ground will come to your knee. Yup, that's all you need.

Sounds easy? Possibly not if you're still yet to reach the crest of this particular wave but the basic rules are to keep it simple, don't charge off on cold tyres, work on getting smoother and faster it will happen as surely as eggs is eggs. 🍳

Right corner, right bike, right weather, left knee scrape...



Pedrosa's course of steroids turned him into a giant...





Er, not quite what we're after here...



Keep smooth, keep safe

Don't try too hard

Rule number one is keep calm and carry on, as them old folks used to say during the war. Don't think of this as an exercise in getting your knee down, but more about riding a little quicker through the corner making sure you get your body position absolutely bang on.

OK, so we've exaggerated things with the picture above but you can see the point clearly, we hope. If ever there was a case for not trying so hard and letting it come to you, then this is it. It's a fact people often ignore, but getting your line, body position and speed

correct are the keys to getting your knee down.

It's tempting, but don't enter the corner trying your hardest to reach for the ground, putting yourself in an unnatural position in the process. Take a look at the picture here and you can see a list of errors; body weight is hanging off the inside of the bike instead of leaning with the bike – in short, it's in an unnatural and potentially dangerous position. The rider's feet aren't planted on the footrest but teetering on the edge of the peg. The left hand is also not holding the bars, more reaching and clinging on. Don't contort and move your body around in any way that compromises the controls or affects weight distribution. The reason behind leaning off the bike to get your knee down in the first place is to help the bike go round the corner. So don't compromise that by hanging off like a goon doing a monkey impression.

We bring our bodies to the inside of the bike in a corner to help it turn, to transfer weight to the inside and be able to carry more speed. Your ideal body position in a corner doesn't change just because you're trying to get your knee down.

And once you've set yourself up perfectly, keep looking through the corner too, it's crucial. Don't ride looking down at the point in the road where you want to hit your knee down. It's a classic mistake to make, not just because you're concentrating on the wrong thing, but because you're not looking where you're going. Looking is important because you need to be hitting your line and keeping smooth in order to get just that little bit faster.



Not quite good enough for knee down? Don't worry, it'll come!





Track is the perfect place to attack...

Which corner?

This is a crucial decision for first-timers too. A typical hairpin corner is perfect but a constant, readable shaped bend is good wherever that may be; track or road. Not too fast, a second gear corner (first isn't smooth enough – your bike and the way it delivers its power means it'll be peaky) with a smooth, constant arc and a nice apex in the middle – plus plenty of space so you can see where you're going. On track, the list is endless – Druids at Brands, Luffield at Silverstone, Shell Oils at Oulton Park, Montreal at Snetterton, Park at Cadwell...

Don't use the local roundabout. We know some do (I did – Ed), but really there are

better places. Roundabouts tend to have a crappy road surface for a start. They're busy, too. Your corner speed versus the other road users arriving at the junction to join the roundabout will generate a risky situation. A bike leant over is small and low to ground. It's also travelling fast so Mrs Doubtfire in her Honda Jazz hasn't got a chance of spotting you – and neither has Fat Harry White in his aggregates tipper truck pulling out. He might well have pulled away long before you come into view, but has no choice once committed to pull out in front of you. So think on and choose a better place before someone moans, knocks you off or Mr Plod spots you.



Look at your exit, not the ruddy big bridge!



Druids at Brands, although they appear to be hiding...



Roundabouts aren't the perfect playground...





Chose your weapon – some bikes are easier than others...

The easy bit

The next stage is the easy bit. Ride that corner plenty of times to get happy, comfortable and make sure you're doing everything right with your body and your eyes. This means turning around lots of time, so ensure that you can do this safely and not make someone do an impromptu emergency stop as you paddle across the road. Approach the corner in a consistent manner; let off the brakes at the same point, turn-in as normal towards the apex, let the bike run into the turn, and feed in a constant amount of throttle to then drive through the turn and out the other side.

Here's a little checklist to follow. Make sure you're not see-sawing with the power, you want the bike to be settled and stable mid-corner so keep a smooth throttle action and use a gear that makes the bike behave smoothly rather than snatchy. There's no need to start making false apexes either, by that we mean don't get part way through a corner and do a sudden lunge with your bike to get it over a bit more. We're not riding round triangles here but riding on a smooth corner that you can build confidence on.

At the apex it's important you still come on the throttle to drive out the corner. Don't concentrate so much on the leaning part and forget you have still to exit the turn. Oh, and **KEEP LOOKING WHERE YOU'RE GOING!** Have we made that clear enough yet? Work on all that, plus your line, until the corner seems easy and you hit the apex (the point at which you naturally need more lean angle) every time. Things should be going well

What's that? You didn't get your knee down yet? Don't worry, stop thinking about your knee altogether and give it another go, concentrating on all the above. The only difference is the next time through the corner try to let the brakes off a metre earlier so you carry a couple of mph more into the apex. If it helps, put a marker on the ground as your 'coming off the brakes' point, then move that marker a metre or so at a time, keeping happy and keeping looking on where you want to go. Build on these techniques and try to concentrate more on the task of introducing more speed and we promise your knee slider will hit the ground all in good time.

One final point to make is most people find



Practice, practice, practice

right knee easier than left. Left knee, right knee, who cares? It's normal and, really, it doesn't matter. And here in lies the bonus of not learning at a roundabout – every time you make a pass round a turn you've got to go back again. Naturally, one way is tighter than the other but the same rules apply. Two for the price of one, and a chance to pair up the scuffs! You'll have joined the club then! **EB**



Come one, come all!



Knee first, lean later...

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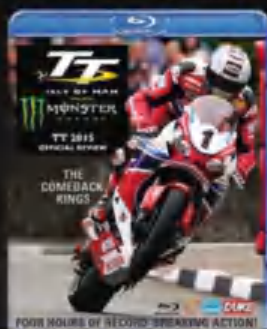
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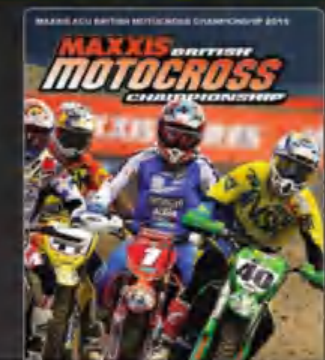
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80 USED K8 GSX-R750? YES PLEASE!

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Used Bike Guide



PRICE GUIDE: £4,495 – £5,500

Cheapest private: £4,495

8,290 miles, Akrapovic exhaust, reluctant sale of low mileage bike.

Our choice private: £4,500

8,118 miles, one owner from new, FSH, blue and white bike.

Cheapest dealer: £4,495

21,632 miles, average condition with a few added extras.

Our choice dealer: £4,599

2,790 miles, beautiful bike with loads of extras and very low mileage.

Ex-demo: £7,295

Just 52 miles, ex-demo 2015 model in the Suzuki Racing paint scheme.

It's all about the balance

A machine with power and handling blended to absolute perfection? That'll be a GSX-R750 then...

Suzuki's 2008/9/10 GSX-R750 is one of those bikes that gets lost in the mists of time. This middle sibling of the modern GSX-R range appeared at a period when no one else was bothering to make 750s and was then replaced by a bike that looked virtually identical – but came with cooler chassis components. Does it deserve to be left in the shadows? Of course not, it's a GSX-R750 and, therefore, by default it is a thoroughly cracking piece of kit.

Launched in 2008, the GSX-R750 was the modern mystery of the motorcycle world. With the economy going down the swanny,

why on earth was Suzuki wasting precious development cash on a long dead class? As well as a very strong company loyalty to the bike, the truth of the matter was that Suzuki's R&D guys didn't exactly break their balls when it came to an update and this model is more of a technical tweak than a full on redesign. Which is probably another reason why it gets forgotten about.

Starting at the front, the bike's developers nipped over the road and stole a pair of Tokico calipers from the Hayabusa on the assumption that if they could bring that behemoth to a halt they should work pretty

2008 – 2010 SUZUKI GSX-R750

*The ultimate
sportsbike?
It's not far off
that accolade...*





OLDER MODEL

The 2006 GSX-R750 is very similar to the K8 model, however the older bike is 5kg lighter, doesn't have an electronically controlled steering damper, lacks variable power modes and is actually 5mm shorter. Prices start at a tempting £3,000.

RECALL

All GSX-R models from K6 onwards are subject to the worldwide brake master cylinder recall. Always ensure the work has been completed as a lot of used bikes slip through the net as Suzuki don't have used owners' names on their database.

GEARBOX

The K6 was the first GSX-R750 to gain a slipper clutch and the extra weight seems to cause a few gearbox issues on higher mileage machines. Always check the cogs engage sweetly and don't hop out or grind during a test ride. Don't be afraid to gas it.

RECTIFIERS

The reg/rec has an annoying habit of overheating on the K8, causing it to fail. Some owners reposition the unit, however more robust aftermarket items can be bought that seem to withstand heat better than the OE Suzuki one.



BRAKES

The K8 has 0.5mm thinner discs than the K6/7, but despite being designed for better heat dissipation, they still have a habit of warping. Lift the bike on its side stand and get a mate to spin the front wheel while you gently apply the brake. Any pulsing through the lever indicates warped discs.

CAM CHAIN TENSIONERS

There are a few reports of bikes showing around 18,000 miles requiring a new cam chain tensioner. It's not a huge job, but if ignored can damage the usually strong motor. Always listen out for a rattle from the engine when it is ticking over that might indicate a duff tensioner.

ACCESSORIES

It is very hard to locate a stock GSX-R750, or any GSX-R for that matter, so be wary of poorly fitted electrical extras that screw up the wiring. A Power Commander does help take a bit of snatch out of the fuel-injection system, but the Suzuki ECU can be re-flashed so a PC isn't necessary.

well on the lighter 750. Then, in an attempt to cure the warping issues of the previous model, thinner discs with more holes for better heat dissipation were added. Back on the prowl, the next thing taken from the parts bin was the GSX-R1000's electronic steering damper while to keep the white-coated chaps with their emissions testing kit happy, the exhaust was updated alongside the fuel injection and engine cases. Believe it or not, this model actually has cases


designed to make the motor quieter, which isn't exactly in the spirit of the GSX-R. However, the most unusual decision of all was to make the K8's chassis more relaxed. How does that work?

Compared to the outgoing model, the K8 has a 5mm longer wheelbase and weighs 5kg more overall. That's hardly development, aren't sportsbikes meant to get sharper and lighter as the generations pass? And it didn't stop there. The K8 also came with variable fuel modes as

standard. On a bike with a reputation for having a near perfect balance of power and agility these two updates certainly threatened to throw a major spanner in the works. Is this the reality? Surprisingly not.

Suzuki's engineers have such a passion for the GSX-R750 model there was no way it would be left lacking and the K8 remains loyal to the family's sporting heritage. In 2008, Fast Bikes rated it third in our SBOTY test, a feat that saw this 750 defeat the likes of the

Ducati 848 and KTM RC8, not to mention all the supersport bikes. It was only topped by its bigger brother, the GSX-R1000, and the all-new Fireblade. That's some achievement for a bike that so many had been writing off for years. How did it achieve this feat? It's a GSX-R750, how do you think it did it...

On both the track and the road, the GSX-R750 K8 is an absolute joy. For very little more financial outlay than a 600, you get a machine that punches harder, 

TPS

Treat any Fi warning light on the dash with concern as this can mean the primary throttle position sensor (TPS) has broken its spring. The sensor itself costs less than £100, but replacing it is best left to a trained mechanic and that means another £100 in labour. If the bike refuses to idle smoothly, that is also usually down to a faulty TPS.

WHEELS

The thin paint on the wheels isn't their only issue as in a low speed crash it is very easy to dent a rim. Have a very good look at the wheels, especially the front one, for any signs of dings. A lot of missing paint indicates multiple tyre changes as the weights rip off the finish. If the bike is being sold as low mileage that might mean an ex-track hack.



ENGINE	Type	749cc, liquid-cooled, 16v, inline four
	Bore x stroke	70 x 48.7mm
	Compression	12.5:1
	Fuelling	Electronic fuel injection
	Tested Power	123bhp @ 13,100rpm
	Tested Torque	72Nm @ 11,200rpm

CHASSIS	Frame	Aluminium twin spar
	F Suspension	41mm inverted forks, fully-adjustable, twin speed damping
	R suspension	Monoshock, fully-adj, twin-speed damping
	Front brakes	Four-piston radial calipers, 310mm discs
	Rear brake	Two-piston caliper, 220mm disc

DIMENSIONS	Wheelbase	1,400mm
	Seat Height	810mm
	Dry Weight	167kg
	Fuel Capacity	17 litres

SPEED	0-60	3.02sec
	0-100	5.98sec
	0-150	11.93sec
	Stg ¼ mile	10.74sec @ 134.14mph
	Standing mile	28.20sec @ 164.22mph
	Top speed	169mph



GET SET

The K8 is from an era when emissions regulation really started to cripple bikes and is equipped with Suzuki's exhaust valve system. Called SET (Suzuki Exhaust Tuning) it sits just below the motor and like Yamaha's EXUP and Honda's H-VIX it just loves to seize solid if not looked after. Check the cables turn freely and if necessary, remove the cover to watch the pulley rotate.



Almost unassuming, don't think the K8 is a dull sportsbike...



RUNNING COSTS

Service interval:

Minor:	4,000m
Major:	8,000m
Engine overhaul:	16,000m

Service costs:

Minor:	£140.00
Major:	£230.00
Engine overhaul:	£420.00


Right fairing:	£164.99
----------------	---------

RH engine casing:	£209.76
-------------------	---------

Front brake assembly:	£39.49
-----------------------	--------

handles equally efficiently and is more than capable of destroying litre bikes when it gets into its stride. Despite Suzuki announcing the engine work was targeted at reducing emissions, the truth was it injected some much-needed extra midrange into the 750 at a time when litre bikes were starting to take another step up the performance ladder, leaving the K7 feeling a little gutless. This new grunt, matched to a near faultless fuel-injection system and crisper fuelling, means you can quite simply take the piss on the GSX-R750 at points where a pre-electronic-aids litre bike would be threatening to fire you into orbit. And taking the piss is something of a GSX-R750 speciality – it always has been.

In the bends the GSX-R750 K8 is fantastic thanks to its sweet steering and excellent chassis. While the 750 motor lacks the initial punch out of corners you get on a thousand, you can carry so much more corner speed both in and at the apex of the bend, it doesn't really lose out that much overall. And on the road it is far easier to ride and considerably less intimidating, especially with the suspension sorted.

A few tweaks of the fully-adjustable suspension, which also has high and low speed damping at both ends, and you can tailor the already very sorted chassis to your own needs, enhancing the whole experience even further. Throw a new set of brake pads, some steel lines and a set of sticky tyres at a used bike and you will have a machine that not only destroys bends, but does so with complete composure, total balance, and a massive dollop of fun. Why can't all machines be as joyous to ride as a GSX-R750? 

ALSO CONSIDER THESE:

SUZUKI GSX-R750 K7

2007

Private £3,500	The older model has a bit more excitement in its engine as well as a slightly sharper chassis. It is also around £600 cheaper.
Dealer £3,800	
Engine 122bhp @ 13,100rpm	

Power	749cc, l/c, 16v, inline four
Torque	74Nm @ 10,750rpm



MV F4 750 SPR

2004

Private £7,000	The SPR is the most sorted F4 750 model, but you pay the price. The earlier bikes are cheaper, but not as reliable or powerful.
Dealer £8,000	

Engine	749cc, l/c, 16v inline four
Power	123bhp @ 12,300rpm
Torque	72Nm @ 11,000rpm



DUCATI 848

2008

Private £4,700	The original 848 model is a lovely road bike but expensive to run and is a little slow steering when compared to an inline four.
Dealer £5,100	

Engine	849cc, l/c, 8v, desmo V-twin
Power	117bhp @ 10,600rpm
Torque	85Nm @ 8,300rpm

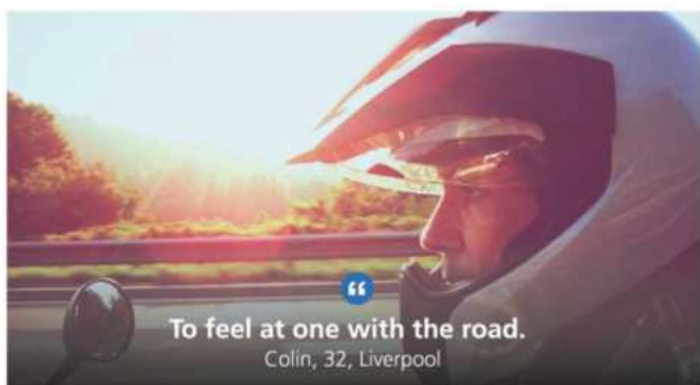


Verdict 7/10

The GSX-R750 is a brilliantly fun machine that is fantastic on both the road and track without the fear factor of a thousand.

✦ HANDLING, EASE OF USE, PRICE

✦ ULTIMATELY, THE ENGINE IS A LITTLE SLOW



“
To feel at one with the road.
Colin, 32, Liverpool



“
To stay focused.
Tom, 42, Southampton

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Market Place

With winter coming, and the likelihood of us having a bit of extra shed time on our hands, we scour the small ads to see what we can come up for a project to keep our idle hands busy – as well as bagging a bit of a bargain...

Damaged Repairable – now there's a euphemistic phrase. From a bike just rolling off the side-stand to one last seen barrel rolling over the tyre barrier at Brands, damaged repairable is a catch-all term to describe something that's been on its side at some point. But why would you want to buy a bike that's been in an accident?

Its price should give you the answer to that. Significantly cheaper than a machine in A1 condition, a damaged repairable bike will be priced accordingly. Factor in the cost of parts and you should be back at the going

rate for that bike. But this doesn't mean that you can chuck a cheap bike into a main dealer and at the end of it have a pristine bike for pennies. No, the pricing of damaged repairables doesn't factor in labour costs – the assumption being that you'll tinker away down the shed not charging for all the hours you're putting in. And more often than not, any back of a fag packet calculations will come up short and won't factor the little things that add up – like seals, gaskets, gromits, nuts and bolts.

But you could use a damaged repairable as the starting point of a project, turning one into a

track bike, or just bodging a bike back to the road as cheap transport. As ever, your key to success is to identify the right bike in the first place. You have to go see one, look over it with a fine tooth comb, and have a solid idea of what the cost of the repairs will be. You also need to ensure that you're not buying a bike that an insurance company says should be destroyed, so check that it's a Cat C or Cat D bike, anything else shouldn't be on the market. You'll need to do some paperwork too, most likely applying for the bike's V5.

Some bikes may have some hidden damage lurking about, so get it stripped as much as you

can – straightening a bike costs money and isn't always picked up by an insurance assessor. The front end is also vulnerable, so take a straight edge with you as a visual guide. If it's said to start, fire it up and let it run for a while. If a bike's been on its side and the engine has kept running oil starvation can cause significant problems.

Then let the bargaining begin. This was someone's pride and joy, but it's not now so the ball is in your court. If you think you can do the repairs, are able to afford the parts and – this is the crucial part – actually want to build a bike back up then this is your chance. Go for it!

SEARCH FOR: DAMAGED REPAIRABLE

1997 Honda VFR750: Buy It Now £895

They say: Cat C. Damage to fairings (cracks) near and off side, bent rear pedal. New chain and sprockets, tyres excellent. 27,000 miles.

We say: Cheap as chips commuter. Live with the cracks for now and enjoy living with a v-four for a while.



2002 Kawasaki ZX-6R A1P £995

They say: Cat C. Excellent running order. Former owner ran over a brick causing damage to front wheel and fairings. 12,500 miles

We say: Ripe for a conversion to track work. New pattern fairings are £250, a front wheel about £130. Low mileage a big bonus.



2015 Triumph Street Triple £4,290

They say: Cat D light theft damage – no clocks, ignition barrel damaged, scratched tank

We say: Two worries here – what did the bike do before it was recovered – was it held on the redline for ages? Then replacing the ignition barrel is tricky, made a bit easier by there being no immobiliser. Buy a new filler cap to negate changing the locks here. Live with the scratches.



2008 Ducati 1098S £6,500

They say: Very minor damage, crack to nosecone and offside panel. Otherwise very clean bike. 7,000 miles.

We say: You can haggle undamaged bikes to this price, so start low. Used panels on auction sites are around £150, used nosecones £200.



A no brainer – simple road scuffs make an easy repair...

WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE?

The obvious alternative is paying a bit more for a bike that's not been down the road at any point. There should be many more of these to choose from, but remember to look to the tell-tale signs of an accident – scuffed bar ends and lever balls, aftermarket engine covers, an unaligned chassis, a cheap paint job or cheap Chinese plastics.



What's behind the unofficial paintjob?

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WORDS: CARL 'PRETTY BOY' STEVENS PICS: BONNI LANE

Have a go **RACER!**

Want to turn your bike into a decent track hack or club racer?
Here's how, starting with the Ducati Panigale 899

We all know that Ducati's baby Panigale is a weapon on the roads (see page 52), but how much work does it take to make it a decent race bike that's competitive in the Ducati Tri-Options cup – a series full of quick riders (plus me and Fagan)? The answer isn't too frightening...

With the standard road bike coming in at 169kg (dry), the first thing to do is shed some weight and get the bike as near as possible to the minimum limit of 157kg. This means saying goodbye to the road fairings, lights, pegs, plastics, and just about anything that is remotely useless or purely aesthetical; basically just go a bit mental on it. If you have to think about keeping bits you can probably live without them. Function over fashion...

Voila, now you have a beautifully blank canvas to create the perfect machine for the rider. From here we swapped out the standard BPF suspension for a K-Tech steering damper, shock and fork internals that are absolutely spot on for me. I'll note that a lot of the field opted for the Öhlins set-up. A sweet handling bike is priceless, so we also went for some CNC rearsets and after market clip-ons alongside the Ducati performance seat (with homemade bum stop), to make sure the positioning on the bike is as perfect as possible. A comfortable rider is a fast(er) one.

As with all one make championships in the world, the regulations have got to be pretty tight for close racing, while keeping costs to a minimum to help us poor racers. For 2015 everyone has upgraded Carrillo con-rods as a fair few standard ones decided to go pop last year, but aside from that the internals are bog standard and it's spot on. We also opted to run a Sigma slipper clutch that does wonders on corner entry – especially when we are first out on a nice green track, or if it's nice and damp. Aside from this, we also run different cans, meaning that beautiful tune you hear is brought to you by a lovely little Termignoni.

Electronically, the bike is stock besides a Dynojet Power Commander, with the ECU being the standard production Ducati piece. The limit for the championship is 148bhp on the dyno, and although everyone claims to be running loads of power mine runs 139bhp and is up there with the fastest bikes, showing that power really isn't everything; as long as it's mapped correctly with a decent power curve you should be laughing. It also helps that I weigh just over ten stone!

Unlike some of the 600s you find, the 899 comes plastered as standard with some nice little gizmos, which work beautifully on track to help its case. The fully adjustable traction control system is a nice feature to have when the going gets a bit wet, and the quickshifter is a beautiful creation to have as riding without one is a real pain in the arse nowadays. You also have the ability to change the amount of engine braking through the EBC settings, which is a pleasant feature to play around with, alongside the standard changeable rider and power modes – although anything less than the highest setting in race mode is pointless on track.

There's also a few safety features that the bike must run – and you'd be silly not to. Crank and clutch cases are a must, alongside the necessary lock wiring (such as on the oil cap) and even a little shark fin is now mandatory as a chain guard. At the end of the

PARTS LIST: PICK & CHOOSE AS YOU LIKE!

K-Tech 25SSK fork internals	£1,085
K-Tech 35DDS shock	£890
CRC Ducati 899 race fairings	£499
Ducati Performance clip-ons	£200
Sigma Ducati 899 slipper clutch	£654
CNC adjustable rearsets	£595
Ducati 899 Termignoni full system	£1,895
Dynojet Power Commander V	£300
R&G crash bobbins (Fork, swingarm, tank, seat)	£100
R&G tank grips	£30
R&G front brake protector	£150
GB Racing clutch/crank casing	£150
SBS carbon sintered brake pads	£40
Brembo floating front discs	£204
MWR air scoops	£70
MWR air filter	£124
Honda CBR600RR grips	£34
Ducati Performance seat	£100
Double bubble screen	£60
DID race chain	£125
Sticky tyres – we use a control	
Pirelli S'Corsa SC2	From £200
Total:	£7,506

SEAT UNIT

I run both a front pad and a bum stop. The front stop is mainly to keep me comfortable in all honesty, as those Brembo M32s do have some stopping power. Being a short arse as well, the bum stop does wonders at keeping you from sliding back under acceleration, especially when you're out of the seat. Personally, I think it's better to keep them thin so you can get on them and get a proper tuck down the straights.

RAIN LIGHT

Every rider has to run one of these, and my bike has a little switch under the number on the left hand side fairing, wired through the battery to some LEDs. This means they're really easy to replace and also nice and simple to install, although a lot of the boys run a proper jazzy set-up through the switches. Handy for trackdays when it's chucking down if you've stripped off all the road stuff.

BODYWORK

Make her look pretty. A happy bike is a fast bike! Our one is wrapped (so it's one big sticker) which actually helps keep the bodywork together if you fall off. Decent value, too.



day if some engine covers save your engine then it's worth it, and you don't want to be 'that' guy that stops play as you've pissed a chunk of oil down the track. That accolade is reserved for the sidecars!

You'll also need to invest in some front brake protectors, which in all fairness actually do give you a lot of confidence in case things get a little bit close. They've saved my arse on plenty of occasions, and probably will do many more times in the future.

Once you've done this you have a beautiful race bike to take on the world, or awesome 899 track hack, and then all you have to do is make her look pretty. In my book you have to apply a snazzy colour scheme that is ridiculously loud, due to the blatant fact that everyone's on the same bike. And no one wants to be boring or blend in! All in all the Ducati Panigale 899 makes a great race/track bike, and is pretty reliable. If you have one get it stripped and get on the grid. You'll love it!

DUKATI



FUELING

You need to run tank foam in order for the bike to be legal, and it helps to keep the rubbish out. Another big thing we found with this bike is how dirty the fuel pump is. Get it out, keep it clean and it will give you an extra few horsepower.

BARS/GRIPS

Running clip-ons means it gives you loads of opportunity to get as comfy as possible. I struggle massively from arm pump so I have to run them higher and further in than I'd like, but it does help. I also run bog standard Honda CBR600RR grips to help, as the Renthal ones I was originally running gave too much feeling to handle over race distance. Funny, aye?

AIR SCOOPS

Changing the scoops on this bike made an absolutely massive difference to the little 899. We run MWR spec ones, with the fairings cut out to fit on the front. Every little helps and means the airbox is beautifully fed.



OIL CHECKING

Anyone who has a baby Panigale will know how much of a bitch it is to check the oil, so a little cut out in the fairing means you don't have to rip them off every time you want to peek, and makes life a lot easier.



Guard that lever



Time for a fiddle?

Riding

WORDS: KEITH CODE PICS: CSS

SHARP FOCUS

Keith Code ponders where your eyes focus when you're deep into a turn...



THE CALIFORNIA SUPERBIKE SCHOOL

Founded by the legendary Keith Code in 1980, the California Superbike School offers a step-by-step method of technique oriented rider training in the art of cornering motorcycles. Over the past 30 years hundreds of thousands of students have improved their riding skills and cornering capabilities at CSS and their team of professional coaches are dedicated to your improvement.



Watching thousands of California Superbike School students do a simple skid-pad exercise over the years brought up enough questions that I was finally compelled to find an answer. Fully 49 out of 50 riders asked to ride in a 50-foot circle look straight ahead, not into the path they are turning. They report concern about hitting something, but the nearest 'something' was at least 300 feet away. Go figure!

Why would you look straight

ahead when your current arc couldn't possibly arrive there? Initially, I put it down to Survival Reactions. But would riders still be holding that useless and dangerous straight-ahead gaze if there was a corner in front of them? That brought up something else.

When you are turning right, all the things in the background move to the left, and vice versa. If you were looking straight ahead, could that be disorienting? How many riders look straight ahead as though

they are wearing a neck brace? A lot. Are they afraid that moving their head is going to distort their view? It's possible.

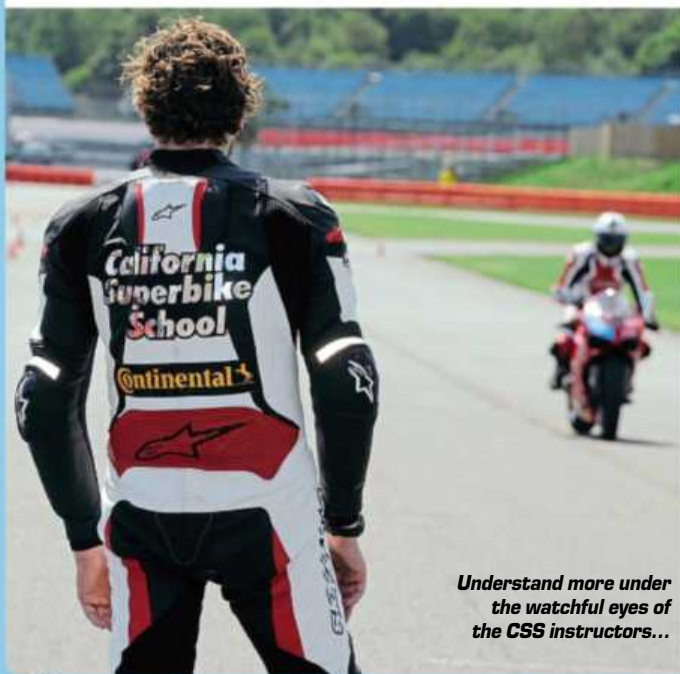
It's educational to watch footage from on-board cameras pointed at MotoGP riders' visors. They lead with their whole head, not their eyes. I began to investigate that as well. Why and when do we turn our heads? The scientific research into human vision comprises volumes, nearly whole libraries, of data. I should find something useful here!

Researching it, I discovered that the average human will move his eyes to about 20 degrees off-centre horizontally before automatically turning his head in that direction. We have a comfort zone of about 40 degrees side-to-side with eye-only movement. That is a little

less than 25 percent of our field of view. So perhaps the professional racer has learned to lead with his head to neutralize hitting that no-go zone response.

Within our field of view, which is about 170 degrees, we only have about 2 degrees of ultra-sharp focus area (known as 'foveal vision'). That's about a pinky nail's width at arm's length. We have another 10 degrees that is good but not as sharp. Visual acuity and detail fall off rapidly from there into our peripheral field, which is the remaining 158 degrees. While peripheral vision provides poor detail, it is very good at sensing movement.

That brings up another question. Is head rotation programmed to keep both eyes on the object to be in sharp



Understand more under the watchful eyes of the CSS instructors...



That's more like it, turn that head to make your eyes happy

CONTACT CSS TO BOOK: TEL 08700 671061 EMAIL INFO@SUPERBIKESCHOOL.CO.UK WEB WWW.SUPERBIKESCHOOL.CO.UK



Got a riding question - either on the track or on the road? Want the CSS team to help? Just drop us a line and we'll get it answered for you. letters@fastbikesmag.com

THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND...



I feel I'm over-cautious going in to blind corners, even ones I know, and always feel I could have gone faster though them when I finally get through them. What should I do?

Dennis, Romford



Being cautious is a good policy! Blind corners are hard enough to judge the shape of, but it doesn't matter how well you think you know one, there is always the potential for something to change since the last time you went around it - a parked car, gravel, puddles, roadworks,

road kill, horse poo, the list goes on. Getting your eyes up and looking for tell-tale signs of the direction of the turn (hedges, trees, lamp-posts, etc) gives you some information, as does tracking the vanishing point to gauge if the bend is tightening or opening up but the rule is this - don't turn in until you are satisfied you have enough visual information to commit to your line. Our tendency is to turn too early, even on a normal corner, but setting yourself up to turn later will allow you to look deeper into the corner and spot those potential dangers.



Now, where is he...



What could be lurking on the other side?




Looking where you've been isn't as useful...

focus? It could be. That makes some sense because a person's nose is going to cut off his binocular vision at about 40 degrees of sideways eye movement. For one or another or all of these reasons, we have a margin of comfort and a response - head rotation - when we approach that zone.

Is it possible that our fascination with the potential dangers lurking on the outside of corners is compelling enough to keep the less-experienced rider from looking in? Or, when he did try to look in, did it spook him because he was out of his normal head-rotation response zone? Again, this is possible.

Conventional wisdom, such as look where you want to go, look into the corner and look through the corner, springs from riders'

mouths like water from a tap. It's good advice. But when it doesn't happen according to plan we now know some of the potential body limits and survival mechanisms that can stand in our way. Another riding enemy isolated and identified!

Meanwhile, it's fine to use what Pro racers do as a guide. But we don't 'look in' because the Pros do; we look in because we can easily focus both eyes on objects. We look in to stay in a range of eye movement that's within that 20-degree comfort zone. Riders must train themselves to ignore the outside-of-turn distractions in favour of plotting a line that will successfully get them through the corner. That is where the greatest portion of our attention should always be. Now do it! 



ASK AN EXPERT

ALL THE CSS COACHES HAVE SPENT YEARS HONING THEIR RIDING, AND ARE PERFECTLY PLACED TO ANSWER YOUR RIDING QUESTIONS. SO DON'T BE SHY, ASK ANDY PECK HERE!

NAILING YOUR RACE START



Any advice on where to look when you're on the grid for a race start? I find my eyes darting all over the place, the start line marshal, start lights, other riders, the rev counter, etc.

Steve, Towcester



There is a lot to look at, but let's look at this in sequence. Knowing where the other riders are when you form up on the grid is your first step.

Locating the flag marshal and the start lights is step two. Practice listening to the sound of the engine at the revs you want. Raise the revs by a few hundred RPM and listen to the change in sound. Drop the revs a bit and do the same. You'll soon be able to hold the revs where you want them without looking at the tachometer.

The most important place to look is the space that you want to drive in to off the line. Now, your peripheral vision is very good at detecting movement, so register the movement of the flag marshal in your peripheral, then switch that attention to the start lights. You don't need to look directly at them, you will see them go out in your peripheral. We're nearly there now...

Finally, immediately switch that attention to the other riders as they move, still putting your central view looking at the space you're going to, but using your wide vision to track where they are going in case you're going to have to alter your plan.



Go get that holeshot!

Technical



Caption to come

One for you, one for me...



JHS's catch-a-rat stall...



JHS RACING OWNER/BIG CHEESE

James Holland runs JHS Racing in Keynsham, and he is our go to guy whenever we need a bike looking at. JHS Racing was set up in the mid 1990s and has since expanded as its reputation has grown. The workshop deals with everything, from scooters to superbikes. Having built and worked on race Suzuki SVs and Triumph 675s James has a wealth of knowledge with these bikes, but elsewhere James' knowledge is as extensive as it gets. So from tyre fitting to MOTs, from dyno work to suspension, James really does do it all. And here he is, passing on his years in the business to Fast Bikes readers!



Servicing Suspension

Owning a relatively new bike with fresh suspension doesn't necessarily mean neglecting its servicing...

One man's idea of a suspension service is another man's wipe over with a damp cloth. You want to service your suspension every two years really, but people don't do they? Workshop manuals recommend all this, but nobody looks at them any more and it's not the sort of thing you can do at home in your garage. It's not only about having the correct tools (some of which are very specialist), it's the inside

knowledge that's needed to do the job properly. Messing about with trick pressurised systems and intricate internals isn't the place for beginners.

Suspension is the new exhaust, in terms of current modifications. At one time you could actually get cheap horsepower from just a can, so everyone bought silencers. Now everyone is opting for suspension upgrades and tweaks instead of simply weight saving – partly because you don't

get much from a can these days. Ten years ago, this servicing technology and know-how wasn't freely available. Thanks to suspension manufacturers not releasing relevant information there weren't that many places to take your forks and shocks. That's changed a lot now.

With age, mileage and use obviously come damping issues and performance losses. Oil starts to lose its viscosity, the molecules in it breakdown, and the relevant components inside aren't getting lubricated as they should. I say to people, you have your engine oil changed every year, when was the last time you changed your fork oil? When you start your bike up and ride it, those poor forks are going up and down, up and down, up and down. So with a set of forks that have never been serviced, you end up with a hefty bill from all the parts being replaced. Then again, when we're talking about older bikes you also have to consider the cost effectiveness of refreshing bits.

Take a 954 'Blade, for example, as we've just taken a very tired-looking one in to the workshop.



Nearly mid-morning muffin time!

CONTACT JHS RACING: TEL 0117 986 8844 EMAIL JHSRACING@LINEONE.NET WEB WWW.JHSRACING.CO.UK

The Showa shock on it is OK, but it's not brilliant by any stretch and probably cost only a few quid to make. Bikes like these 'Blades are coming into the workshop more frequently as the damping is starting to go and, in general, the shock is getting tired. The costs involved in servicing and/or refurbishing it far outweigh ruining the handling by doing nothing to it.

The shock would be stripped down to its bare components, visually inspected for damage and wear, before reporting back to the customer to recommend any parts replacing (bladder bags, pistons, etc). The service cost would include labour, oil and gas, which is £120 plus your vodka and tonic, with parts on top of that. These type of shocks use bladder bags that are over ten years old, have been pressurised to 6bar, and it's getting a bit saggy now. The seals and associated parts are going to have wear on them. The time involved in taking all these seals and bushes out and replacing them outweighs the cost of buying a completely new aftermarket unit. Getting parts for these older shocks isn't too tricky as we've got contacts, and if we haven't got something that's exactly the same, we can modify something to fit. The same goes for fork servicing and is very similarly priced at £150 plus vat, which works on loose forks coming to us in the workshop. Again, that covers labour, main seals, and oil. If you want different springs or valving changes, that's extra to go on top of those figures.

Look at all the hoo-hah several years ago surrounding Big Piston Forks. What does every manufacturer who makes aftermarket suspension do? Takes all of that out, gets rid of it because it isn't any good. It's an amalgamation of plastic and bits of tin. It was just a way of marketing new technology and

making bike manufacturers buy in to their products for OE machinery.

Not everyone wants to (or can) splash out a grand on Öhlins suspension, and we have a lot of questions regarding this sort of servicing and upgrade work on standard suspension – the main one being is it worth it? The answer is that yes, it'll transform it – it's like a new vest on a tramp. For models up to the late Noughties, it's a really good, cost effective mod against a cartridge kit. You're going to have to buy springs anyway, be it a cartridge kit or piston kit. A set of springs is £85, then you've got your standard service charge but, for argument's sake, you want to fit some flow control valves (the compression adjusters at the bottom of the leg) and a piston kit, which will cost you about £350. You're not going to buy a cartridge kit for £350 are you? Probably not for anything less than £700 these days.

Other recommended tweaks? New oil, clean it all out and fresh new fork springs weighted to the rider (that makes a big difference) will also bring huge performance gains to older bikes. Some workshops advocate removing the bump-stop to allow more of the stroke to be utilised, and it's one of those things we used to do years ago to track bikes. But, because the bump-stop is fitted to the actual damper rod and held in by a crimp, you can't just slide it off: it has to be cut off, so we don't tend to touch them on road bikes these days.

A lot of modern bikes now won't allow any piston kits, as they're all very cheap sealed units. We have to undo the bottom of the leg, undo the whole lot inside and slide the entire OE internals out to replace with another aftermarket unit.

Again, another FAQ is about oil and whether or not it's worth changing as a cheap mod. OEM

suspension manufacturers don't tell you the weight of oil that's used – but we can. They'll list a part number of their oil. Just like tyre manufacturers, who may list a tyre as a 180-section when you measure it as a 190-section, oil manufacturers have very different way of listing weights and viscosities. Öhlins, for example, suggest using their oil as it's been tested and formulated to work with other items like seals and o-rings. Introducing a cheaper oil that may have additives that could corrode these items isn't good. Buy right, buy once...

PROPER TOOLS

ESSENTIAL WORKSHOP KIT



TOTM – Ultraship Ultra-75 Scales

■ After a few months of featuring expensive exotic tools and full factory Snap-On items, we thought about opting for something a bit more 'everyday'. These scales are an essential part of building racing engines, ensuring matching weights of components and balancing across these engines. But they're also dead handy in other workshop duties. You can pick them up for around £20, and with standout features such as an on/off button and the ability to toggle through different weight measurements, they're a bloody bargain.

Do the maths and think about buying new bits



Don't forget the spring at the back



Hasn't got a leg to stand on, yet...



If you don't know the difference between yokes and yolks, Dzus and Zeus, or suspension and suspenders – email the experts letters@fastbikes.com

WIN A HONDA!



HONDA CRF250R* WORTH OVER £6,600!

We've teamed up with Honda again to offer you the chance to win a state-of-the-art off-road bike! This stunning Honda CRF250R is up for grabs in our free to enter competition... what are you waiting for? Enter now!



The 2016 CRF250R has a substantial top-end power boost from a new HRC-developed cylinder head, piston and con-rod, with stronger bottom-end torque and no loss of mid-range performance. And the Showa SFF-TAC-Air forks have been further improved to reduce friction and improve response and damping. The aluminium beam frame and mass centralisation programme give the bike lightning fast agility and sure-footed stability while Honda's programmable engine mapping system means riders can select one of three pre-set configurations to suit the prevailing conditions. If you're a serious MX2 competitor, this is the bike you need to ride.

SPECIFICATION:

- 249cc single cylinder engine
- Showa 49mm inverted air suspension SFF-TAC forks
- Aluminium twin tube frame
- 260mm hydraulic wave disc brake
- Engine Mode Select Button on handlebars
- Fuel Injected

ENGINE

Type: Liquid-cooled 4-stroke single cylinder uni-cam
Displacement: 249cc
Max. Power Output: 29.4kW @ 11,500rpm

FRAME

Type: Aluminium twin tube

CHASSIS

Seat Height: 951mm

Ground Clearance: 322mm

Kerb Weight: 105.6kg

SUSPENSION

Front:

Showa 49mm inverted SFF-TAC air fork (310mm stroke)

Rear:

Showa monoshock using Honda Pro-Link system (317.6mm stroke, 133mm axle travel)
Dunlop MX52 tyres.

Enter at the Classic Dirt Bike Magazine stand at the International Dirt Bike Show 2015, where the bike will be on display, or enter online at www.dirtbikeshow.co.uk. The winner will be the first name selected at random.

*Competition open to UK applicants only. Specific terms and conditions and general competition terms and conditions apply: visit www.dirtbikeshow.co.uk for full details. Closing date: Monday, 9th November, 2015.

Legal

If you've been a naughty biker, you need some decent advice, get it from: mail@whitedalton.co.uk



ANDREW DALTON

PENAL SERVITUDE PREVENTOR

The Fast Bikes Legal Clinic is compiled by Andrew Dalton, and his bike riding barristers and solicitors at White Dalton Motorcycle Solicitors.

They deal with personal injury claims and their sister company, Motor Defence Team, deals with all the motoring offences. They know everything about bike law. Andrew is a former London motorbike courier turned barrister and solicitor, and we know he's good. All the White Dalton lawyers are qualified barristers, or solicitors, or both - and they all have full bike licences, too. They don't act for insurance companies or the prosecution. They are Britain's most specialist law practice, and if they don't know the answer to your question, there probably isn't one. Don't rely on the advice from your insurance appointed solicitor, get proper independent advice.

For road traffic offences call **Motor Defence Team** 0800 280 0912



For non-offence cases call **White Dalton Motorcycle Solicitors** 0800 783 6191



Visit their websites whitedalton.co.uk motordefensesolicitors.co.uk



Council cutbacks have left some roads in ruins, not necessarily in this country...

Mud, Mud Inglorious Mud On The Road...

When Tarmac turns brown, who's to blame in an accident?

Q I was riding along a suburban road in damp conditions. The road was lit by street lights. I started braking for a roundabout that I knew was there when I literally just slid off my bike. The fall resulted in my bike sliding down the road and I sustained an injury that left my arm in plaster for eight weeks. Once I stopped sliding, and got to my feet, I realised that there was a sheet of mud on the carriageway, which was coming out of a small building site. There were tracks coming out of the building site, showing a clay and mud mix that had handily formed a Y shape going into and out of the building site. Whilst waiting for the ambulance I took photos on my iPhone and a mate returned the next day and took some more photos with his camera.

My insurance company appointed Solicitors have received a rejection letter from the Council, who should have kept the road clean, because the Council are apparently not responsible for 'transitory material not forming the fabric of the highway' whatever that might mean. My Solicitors have now told me it is just bad luck and bang goes my no claims bonus. Luckily, I could do my job with my arm in plaster but I have had to pay a small fortune in taxi fares to get into work. It does not seem right to me

that I pay my taxes and expect the roads to be kept clean. When my Solicitors first wrote they sent a very aggressive letter to the Council talking about the Council's duty to keep the roads safe for traffic which might reasonably be expected to pass along it and that certainly includes motorbikes in my part of south east England.

Do I just have to take this one on the chin or can I claim for damages?
Name withheld

A Unfortunately your Solicitors have got the law fundamentally wrong. The Local Authority are correct. They are liable for the 'fabric of the road', that is the material which they have actually built, and they have to maintain that. They are not responsible for the layout of the road, in all but the most extreme of circumstances, nor are they responsible for anything which sits on top of it, if it is of a fleeting or 'transitory' nature. However, you do have a case, and your starting point is to find out who the owner of the land is who is doing the building work. Luckily your photographs show the yellow 'planning permission' signs still around the building works, so your Local Authority will be able to tell you who applied for planning permission that will give you a

pretty good clue as to who is in control of the job. Where a person allows material to escape on to the highway which could cause harm, they are liable. This has been established law since before the Second World War, (the original law goes back to the days of the Crusades, so it's hardly new) and your claim should be brought in nuisance against the controllers of the building site, or whoever has appointed them. Unfortunately, your 'Solicitor' honestly describes herself as 'a junior paralegal' and has clearly never heard of this concept of law. I have to say I am quite impressed she actually knew enough about Highway's law to know about the Highways Act and Section 41 duty, albeit she has applied it wrongly here. You have a sound legal case, and your photographic evidence is clear that there was a significant amount of mud on the carriageway and, moreover, you can see exactly where your bike has slid, and cleared its own little path through the mud on the carriageway. If your claim is directed to the builders or the land owner, I anticipate you will achieve a swift settlement, albeit perhaps not with your current Solicitors. It is usually a worrying sign when you have to write into a magazine to direct your own solicitors to what the law actually is...

Chatter

STAR LETTER

BOG TROTTER

I'm the wheelieing-to-the-toilet Marc who attended the Stunt Asylum Stoppie School with Charlie, whose great write-up is featured in the current issue. Charlie is an absolute dude and the whole day was brilliant! The only problem is now finding somewhere decent to practice. I thought I'd found a great industrial park that was quiet on the weekends – until some goon of a security guard called the police on me...

Having been asked to write my views of the day, I was totally gutted that it didn't make the final cut. Obviously, I'm going to assume it was because you didn't have space for it due to Charlie's gushing verbosity and not

because it was utter wank! I even rushed out to get a copy of the mag as soon as it was released, but was even more devastated that my picture hadn't made the cover page! I don't know what your cover page criteria is, but I'm guessing wangers who don't work for the mag don't get on it – which is fair enough. Although I'm prepared to forgive this, out of the purity of my heart – especially if you twang some free stuff my way. I'm completely opposed to bribery and not one to implant ideas, but an Arai Quantum ST Pro in concept black will do nicely, thanks.

Anyhoo, great write-up, great mag, keep up the good work, etc. Oh, and do bear me in mind next time you have to



Time for a toilet break...

spank an H2 round Portimao and one of your team can't hack it after the first corner and wimps out!

Marc, email

We will bear you in mind, Marc, and you'll be glad to know that you're about 783rd on the list! And keep up the stunting!

WIN OXFORD

You can win a set of awesome new Oxford HotGrips – worth £79.99 – for writing the Fast Bikes Star Letter.

The grips have ergonomically engineered surface structures to optimise riding performance. Soft, ultra-grippy diamond tread is inspired by race grips for comfort and feedback. Grip length can be trimmed if required and has open ends so that bar end weights can be fitted. The intelligent heat controller uses a sealed-for-life welded case construction for long-term durability and weather-proofing. There are five heat settings with LED lights to indicate the level. Battery Saving Mode protects against flat batteries. Thanks to their unique expandable design and fool-proof wiring loom, HotGrips are extremely easy to fit too.

WORTH
£79.99!



kiddi moto

KIDS' CORNER

Just thought I'd share a picture of my little 10 month old Chloe having a seat on Daddy's bike. She's delighted, mummy's not! She'd love to see her picture in the mag! Keep up the good work.

Wilson Black



Heaven is here!

HAPPY HOLS

Fast Bikes mag, sunny Spain and unlimited beer! Bloody magic!

Brett Walker



AS SEEN ON
TWITTER



@GBRacingEU

Some more nice little bit of promo in this months @fastbikesmag Cheers Big Dawg!!!!

@Byker_Groves

@fastbikesmag great issue this month guys, particularly the GSX-R feature and the better braking tips!

@rangeroverdoc

@fastbikesmag

Hello is that

Fastbikes? This is

Daniella Dimples

Danisa, Where

have you guys

been all my

Daddy's life??

@675_Matt

@fastbikesmag Footballers?? #Tarts



BITCH, PLEASE!

@rst_motodirect

Always good to have

@fastbikesmag in to see us,

something cool is being cooked

up in the #RaceDept for Rootys!!!

@Dodd1990

@fastbikesmag Can you guess

where I rode last week?



COPY AND PASTE

I'm an avid reader that buys your magazine regularly. Keep doing what you're doing! While Googling (search string "Kawasaki Z800R 2016") for more news on whether a Z800R is coming next year I came across a blog entry, and I noticed the text is identical to the Upfront column in issue 305. No mention of any credits to your magazine. I'd join you for a manhunt if I hadn't just binned my bike.

Dag Andreas Ruud

Oslo, Norway

Good spot Dag! Every copied feature and illegally downloaded issue means fewer McDonalds for Fagan, so keep 'em peeled!



Want your greatest riding cock-up, triumph, or just the missus' naked form immortalised in these hallowed pages? Email letters@fastbikesmag.com

BLIPPER BLATHER

Fast Bikes is the most knowledgeable of all the motorcycle mags, but I was surprised when you recently criticised the Tuono V4's electronic Aprilia Performance Ride Control (APRC) system for having no auto blipper downshift. I have had all models – the v-twin Tuono and Mark II, before the new V4. When there were no electronics, Aprilia was among the first to produce bikes with a slipper clutch. Apart from the anti-hop function, one of the advertised benefits was bump-down gearshifts, without pulling in the clutch. This appeared to work like magic and I still do this on my latest machine. Above the recommended rev threshold, the bike snicks into gears going both up and down the box, sans lever. Electronics are often criticised for not using a mechanical solution like this aid or because they isolate the rider from using the seat of your leathers skills and machine vibe feedback. Have I been riding wrong for the past decade? I bow to your opinion.

Some Geezer

Cheers Geezer. The auto blipper systems are magic, allowing you to keep your hands on the bars at all times. Aprilia's suite of electronics is cracking, and we'd agree in part that their downshift system is nothing short of witchery. But a little blip would be nice!



Fully loaded – but no blipper

FLASH, BANG, WALLOP, WHAT A PICTURE

Hi Roots! Pleased to notice you have used some of my images previously sent to you of Luis Carreira getting it wrong at Creg ny Baa in the 2010 TT. It is a bit ironic really as Luis lost his life in an accident in the Macau GP later in the year.

I've been to see the NG Road Racing recently. It's brilliant racing with quite a few spills. I attach a sequence of three at Thruxton's club chicane. I'm pleased to say neither rider was seriously hurt (166 is Cameron Fraser but the other rider was not listed in the programme). Also attached are two pics of James Haydon (of Eurosport commentator fame) going well – and then departing from a beautiful G50 Matchless at Castle Coombe. Thanks for the super mag.

David Atton



Ramping up the action



Reliving the good old days!

PIPE DOWN

Hey there. As I sit here in the late autumnal sunshine reading October's issue I chance across the longterm review of the bikes. I would give (almost) anything to have a new bike. The Italian exotica on show at the Silverstone Ducati-only trackday? Or the carbon 1199? Or what about the MV Augusta F3 800?

Yes, give me the MV so Benjamin doesn't deface it anymore. WTF has he done with that exhaust? It looks the worst ever, like its been bodged from an 1980s Yamaha 50cc FS1-E. It is naff, pants, crap and a whole host of other unprintable expletives. He doesn't deserve it. Give it to me, me, me to care for. I will give you honest feedback on it.

Regards
Rich, email



Anyone else offended?

That's a Moto2 exhaust from a Moto2 bike, so we'll let the dyno figures do the talking!



AS SEEN ON
FACEBOOK

Fast Bikes Magazine: Lottery win please, sigh...



Luke Godfrey: Praying 2 strokes like this start making a comeback.
Ben Wiskin:



Looks like I picked the wrong week to stop masturbating.

Joe Faulkner: I would fight Ronnie Pickering to own that bike!
Deaghán Mac Crábhagáin: I've a serious horn after that!!
Jason Mark Kelly: That's got to be worth getting a divorce for!!!!!!

Ollie Orbell: I've just soiled myself!
James Broomhead: I love the smell of two stroke in the morning... smells like victory...
Barry Jones: Beautiful, I love the fact that this is made by the Swiss who've banned Motorsport and hate high emission vehicles.
Paul Freeman: Square 4 power!



MoreBikes

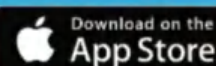
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Travel & Tracks

POSTCARD FROM: THE SPANISH PYRENEES

I think I've had the best summer ever. I bought a new GSX-R1000 (bring it on, haters!) at the start of the year and it feels that I've not been off it. I won't ride over winter having done so on my old GSX-Rs and regretted it, but I can't complain about the 8,000 miles I've done on it so far this year. And I won't complain about the route I did across the Pyrenees in July. I think you've mentioned the N-260 before, but it had always been on my bucket list to do. So me and my mate Gary (on his new R1) got the ferry down to Bilbao and headed for Barcelona. We dropped down to Pamplona and settled in there for the night, before getting up early and heading east the next morning. I have never had such a full-on riding experience. It was amazing; the roads, the scenery, the traffic (or lack of) were all perfect. Tempting as it was to head off down some of the tributaries of the N-

260, we stuck at it and went as fast as we could towards the coast. As it turns out, Barcelona was too much to bite off, especially as it was so hot, so we found a hotel with a pool and knocked off the remaining miles the next day.

The plan was to find another route back, but after a day in Barcelona we decided we wanted to do the same on the way home, but take our time, follow our noses and make a few diversions. The plan paid off because we found some more epic roads, met loads of bikers from all over Europe (although nearly all were on GSs), and eventually got back to Bilbao to catch our ferry with just five minutes to spare. It was just epic, and all done on a brilliant bike too. If you've not done the Pyrenees, then I'd urge that you do because I can't see how biking can get much better than this!

Tony, Worcester.

Smiles of fun to be had in Spain!



WIN

Tell us about your travels. Send in a story and some pictures (to fastbikes@futurenet.com) and you could win an ace Kriega R35 backpack - worth £145!

► QUADLOC™ HARNESS ► EASY ON/OFF - ZIP IN/OUT SYSTEM ► TARGETED WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION ► PATENTED ALLOY ADJUSTERS ► 2 FRONT HARNESS ZIP POCKETS ► EXPANDING MESH POCKET WITH SHOCK CORD ► 16 POINT COMPRESSION ► SCOTCHLITE™ REFLECTIVE PANELS ► INTERNAL MAGAZINE SLEEVE ► 35 LITRE (2100cu in) CAPACITY

Kriega

WORTH £145!



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT: MOTORCYCLE LIVE 2015

Hardly the world's biggest adventure, going to Brum.

True, but it'll be your first opportunity to get up close and personal with the latest 2016 bikes.



A Question of Fast Bikes is back!

I'm skint and not a window licker. What's in it for me?

We'll be honest. A few years ago the show was all a bit crap. But thanks to a more hands-on approach, the fun is being injected back into the event. Manufacturers are getting more interactive, there are always loads of racers there and it really is a chance to grab yourself a bargain.

Interactive? So I can ride a bike at the show can I?

Yes, head to the Test Zone (go midweek to avoid the queues), sign your life away and you can jump on a range of bikes from the main manufacturers, though due to numbers you'll only likely get out on one bike. Non bikers can go through the Get-On experience while the kids can jump on a variety of little bikes.

How much is it then?

Tickets are £20 on the door and that's about it apart from your lunch money and whatever else you want to treat yourself to. If you want to see the FMX show with the riders doing their knick-knacks or whatever, that'll be a £7.50.

I thought you had to pay for parking?

If you're in a car, it's £12. But if you turn up on a bike it'll cost you nowt. The organisers get you into one of the adjacent halls so the bike is covered and safe.

When is it then?

It runs from the 28th of November to the 6th of December.

And will my favourite magazine be there?

Yup, we're behind the Fast Bikes Question of Bikes on the main stage everyday - come and say hello!

WORTH GETTING UP FOR: A44 AND THE COTSWOLDS

To get the best of any road it's worth setting the alarm and getting up early. Sleeping policemen, hardly any traffic and the best of the day - what more could you want?



Red and yellow and pink and green, orange and...

The Cotswolds is a pretty old place - as in pretty, we're not making reference to its age... For this route, we've pointed out the A44 close to Broadway, where there's a great stretch of road called Fish Hill (don't ask us why it's called that). With some massive sweepers getting you up (or down) the hill and the up part being blessed with two lanes you can really get stuck into the road. Be warned, mind. The police do take an active interest in any race-like activity in the area (and dogging in the carpark at the top at night) and that if it's a bit cold or wet then because there are lots of trees about things can stay a little greasy. Parts of the surface aren't super smooth, either. Once you've been up and down a few times, then what? We'd say head to Banbury. Cutting across Oxfordshire, the B4081 and the B4035 are some ace roads. You don't get a series of switchbacks, but you do get some good flowing roads that don't stutter too much through a relentless flow of villages. Do it the other way and you'll be supping a coffee in a quaint tearoom in Broadway by brunch...

GRIP ADVISOR: SUPERSPORT SIZING

Tyre sizing is all over the shop these days and with supersport bikes so popular on track the debate over 180 or 190 rear sections remains strong. Much depends on whether your bike uses a 5.5-inch or a 6-inch rim, and you have to factor in differences between each manufacturers' sizing. It's like clothing; a 34 waist from one shop may equate to a 36 in another. The pressure to move to a 190-section tyre is because that's what was used in racing a few years back. When racers started winning on them, everyone wanted to use them. But the tyre de jour in both WSS and BSS is the 180/60 from Pirelli, a size developed to suit all bikes in the class. Jim Worland, Pirelli's Product Manager, reckons that this size of Supercorsa sits better on the rim and offers a bigger contact patch than the 180/55. "The 180/60 is more of a balloon tyre in its profile, and that's why it works so well. It's a bit wider on the rim but it sits in the parameters that we're allowed to call a 180 tyre. If you stick a 190 on a 5.5-inch tyre then the edge of the tyre is pulled round. This leads to a smaller contact patch in the centre of the tyre and it also pulls the side of the tyre, so when you move to the edge of it you'll have a feeling of it dropping off. Ducati use the size on the 899 and previously the 848SF and are happy with the benefits it offers."



WSS sticks with 180...

SORTING SUSPENSION SET-UP: PRELOAD

It's all well and good bunging a spring into your fork or shock, but that in itself is half the job done – what you need to do now is add preload. This is the distance the spring is compressed from its fully extended position – how much you press it down before you apply any pressure from outside influences – undulations on the road or braking, acceleration and cornering forces.

If you suspended a bike in mid air and then sat it down on the ground, the bike's weight will compress the suspension a little. This is called your static sag, measured at both the front and rear ends. It's how much the bike's weight acts on the suspension. If you then sit on it, the suspension will compress some more. The difference between it in the air and with you now sat on it is your rider sag. If you've got this mental picture in your head then you can see that preload is key in setting up your bike because it determines the posture of the bike – where it sits on its springs. Too little and the bike sits low and will be close to the



You don't need to wear gloves...

bottom of its travel, so you add preload to enable to spring to operate closer to the top of its travel, but not so much as the spring tops out. What these preload figures should be depends on many things, and we're not about to issue a blanket Xmm static sag, Ymm rider sag, because this depends on the bike, the rider and the use of the bike. But it's important to note that in itself preloading a spring does not increase the spring rate, or make it 'harder'. So we should be starting to build up a picture of what your suspension does, ready to move on to more complex topics. Stay tuned.

SMOKEY AND THE BANDITS

The biggest complaint about racing is the cost, so when a new series comes along promising to keep outlay to a minimum it should prove popular – especially with novices that want to dip a toe in racing's waters. Based on the seminal Suzuki Bandit 600 (Mk I and II), bikes don't get much simpler for this class in the Formula Prostock series. With bikes available for well under a grand, all you need to do is lockwire up those bits that can come undone, ditch the lights (and anodized bits that will be on it) and stick on some decent rubber. Quicker than the likes of series that have come before this Bandit class (like MZ racing), the air-cooled Suzuki should enable riders to develop new skills without becoming bamboozled by tuning, set-up and having to spend a small fortune. But pot hunters note, the organisers state that, "The Suzuki Bandit 600 Challenge regulations have been written to provide a level playing field for all competitors, regardless of their engineering ability, deviation from these regulations will not be tolerated. The FP3 class is not an engineering class, it is a simple formula with inbuilt cost controls." Abide by that, and you should have a hoot. For more info, head to www.formulaprostocksracing.co.uk.

Er, that's cheating!



TOP 5 TRACKDAYS

Days are in short supply on the run up to Christmas, but there's still a chance to get out for a blast on track – for peanuts, too!

- 14th November – Snetterton
300 – £59 No Limits
Have a hoot, Norfolk way, for under £60
- 21st November – Oulton Park – £89 – No Limits
Stick on the thermals for a ride round Britain's best track.
- 22nd November – Valencia – from €40 – Valencia circuit
Talk to the circuit, choose your sessions and relive MotoGP!
- 4th December – Almeria - £449
– Focused Events
Four days on track, transport and hotels. Bargain!
- 11th December – Brands Hatch - £79 – MSV
Open pitlane for last time you can get on track in 2015.

Put warm gear on...



RIDER PACKS / BIKE PACKS / WORKS SERIES / ACCESSORIES

Kriega

KRIEGA.COM



An angel with a very dirty face...



Austrian tax...



Slovenian tax...



Speed tax...

ROOTSY YAMAHA YZF-R1

TIME ON TEST:
6 MONTHS

05568

ODOMETER
MILES

BHP: 175
GAIN: 0

NEXT AIM:
DE-CAT TIME

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Gone out for a bit of a blast..."

I could have been accused of being a bit mileage shy on the R1 up until this month. I've got a few excuses up my sleeve, but thanks to sticking 3,800 miles on the bike over the course of a week in Europe on the Cannonball Bike Run, there's no way that any indictment of that ilk will stick now.

Most questioned my intelligence when I announced that I was taking the R1 on the trip, but I had supreme confidence in Yamaha's finest that it would be more than up to the job. So were there times when I wished that I was on something other than the R1 on the Cannonball Bike Run? Nope, not once. Alright, maybe the odd occasion...

The way to and from the event was great. Motorway miles were easy, in part to me lowering the Gilles footpegs to their lowest setting and the bubble screen cossetting me perfectly on the Autobahn. I'd also canted the levers down a little to get them to suit my hands, and I'd say that everything was just about as ergonomically perfect as things could have been. OK, so my arse

fell asleep on the way back home, but that would have happened on just about anything this side of a business class flight back to Blighty.

Fuel economy? It's not really an R1 forte, but it wasn't too bad. Overall it was giving just over 40mpg, even after entering a few battles on the German motorways with anything that was worth baiting – R8s, S8s, M3s, M5s, 911s and the like. I was getting around 130-odd miles before the light came on and then getting another 20 or so on reserve. But on one occasion when a Belgian service station wouldn't serve me on my £15,000 bike dressed in £2,000 of gear for fear of me legging it, I managed to get nearly 180-miles on one tank. OK, that meant drafting lorries at 56mph and coasting into the petrol station, but it did it – and kudos to it!

But this trip was all about the bits that weren't on the motorway, and it was here that the R1 excelled. On all manner of roads, the Yamaha delivered everything on a silver salver. I had the Power Mode on B, the Traction Control on Level 3 and the LIF system off, but I never saw a light flashing or had the delivery stuttering through any electronic interference. Credit here also goes to the Dunlop SportSmart 2 tyres that offered outstanding grip in wet and dry environments.

The lever almost came back to the bar on occasion down a few passes, first



Price from new: £14,999
Insurance group: 17

Modifications	Price
GB Racing protection	£173.11
Akrapovic exhaust	£669.99
Endurance screen	£101.99
Gilles brake lever	£159.99
Gilles clutch lever	£159.99
Gilles rearsets	£599.99
RUNNING TOTAL	£1,865.06

gear was too tall to get out of the slower hairpins, and the Gilles rearsets have made the gearshift harder work than it should be, but these were minor gripes amid the joyousness of riding on some of the most fantastic and well surfaced roads in Europe.

It needs some TLC now, mind. Not only does the bike need a proper good clean, the chain needs adjusting, I'll stick a set of new SBS pads in, and it could do with a slurp of oil, but given the radical nature of the near 4,000 miles undertaken on the Cannonball, it's come out of the other side as you'd expect a new bike to. It's certainly fared better than me, who can't get through a day after the event without a nap come mid-afternoon. Speaking of which...



Yeah! 3,714 miles done.
Boo! Poor fitment leads
to tank paint scuffs...





Screw you, I'll park where I want!



BENJAMIN MV AGUSTA F3 800

TIME ON TEST:
4 MONTHS

00907

ODOMETER
MILES

BHP: 135
GAIN: 9

NEXT AIM:
Get it back

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Missing her all month..."

The month began really well for the MV and me. We had quite a few smashing rides, including one up to the BSB round at Silverstone. I see that some folk don't like the SC Project can that's now on, but let me just say that regardless of what you may think of the looks, the power increases have been more than decent and it's also loud enough to shatter teeth. It's that loud that I wore earplugs for the motorway part of the journey to the 'Stone, and I'm not usually an earplug kinda guy.

I think it sounds epic, and the can itself is a Moto2 exhaust, just like the ones on many Moto2 machines, so it's got proper race pedigree. I also didn't choose it, the Tsingtao team who are building it did, but quite frankly I'm glad they opted for it. The din, as well as sounding cool, did mean cars got out of

my way, which was actually quite nice!

And it is so lovely to ride now, with the extra power and torque allied to the fuelling changes made via the Power Commander V on Hampshire MV Agusta's dyno. It's far easier to use at slower speeds, the throttle connection is also much improved and the extra zip more than palpable as it picks the front up far easier in the first couple of gears. I did manage to scare myself a bit mind you, once when I exited a roundabout in a giddy fashion and didn't see a patch of gravel. The TC kicked in but on that surface the tyre is always going to still slide if it's already started, and I came pretty close to pinging myself out of the seat and into the bushes. But hey, what's a vigorous ride without the odd close call? Still shat myself though...

But then not long after tearing up the Tarmac, she went off back to Tsingtao Towers again for some more love. The first thing that's being done to her is a paintjob, one that will mimic the British supersport bikes they run. I'm particularly glad of this, as firstly I love me a decent race replica, and secondly I've never been a fan of the standard white/black scheme she came in. I always would have wanted something louder, it was just too reserved for my liking. It would have suited many other bikes, but this is an MV, and MVs are supposed to be in your face and looking fly.

But not only that, there will be more kit stuck on too. I'm pretty chuffed to hear an adjustable Öhlins racekit steering damper will find its way on, that



Price from new: £11,899

Insurance group: 16/17

Modifications	Price
SC project slip-on	£432.00
PCV & Secondary Module	£640.00
Carbon hugger	£120.00
Carbon mudguard	£165.00
Carbon chain - guard	£120.00
Accossato clutch - perch	£149.99
Accossato levers	£79.98
Zero Gravity screen	£80.00
GB Racing covers	£140.00
Dyno time	£99.00
MWR air filter	£121.99
Eazi-Grip tank pads	£25.99
Bridgestone R10s	£250
RUNNING TOTAL	£2,423.95

Contact: www.hampshiremvagusta.co.uk



The SCP divides opinion...

was the one remaining thing that always gave me pause when riding like a tit as she could get pretty lively at times. The adjustment is also welcome, I can't stand OE fitment ones that can't be tweaked as they're almost always shite.

There will also be a new 520 chain and JT sprockets stuck on, as well as some spiffing Bonamici rearsets and some Gilles lever protectors. There will also be more carbon appearing, like the belly-panel and hopefully the ECU will be tweaked to enable the downshift blipper too. It's shaping up to be frigging epic! **EB**



The snapper snapped, in this case by John Gaisford



JONNY SUZUKI GSX-S1000F

TIME ON TEST:
3 MONTHS

00962 ODOMETER
MILES

BHP: 140
GAIN: NA

NEXT AIM:
FIT YOSHI

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Waiting with trepidation..."

Thirty years ago, I used to waste homework time on a ZX Spectrum game called Full Throttle. Although it was one of the speccy's better games of the time, it looked pretty awful. A dotted white line ran towards you to give a tremendous impression of the speed you were doing, and the other riders changed size from small to medium to large as you caught and passed them. You always started last, and round a now-unrecognisable Silverstone (with six bends!) my challenge was to win in three laps, which was just about do-able. The top speed of your so-called 500cc motorcycle was 175mph.

175mph was also the speed at which

John McGuinness was taking the kink at Folly on Castle Combe's start-finish 'straight' in testing for this year's TT, as I discovered this month when I found myself sitting in the 'New To Track' classroom in our local circuit's sumptuous Strawford Centre, listening to our group instructor telling us how he (McPint) managed this feat only by using absolutely all the track and turning in at exactly the right spot. I wasn't there to find out how fast me or the GSX-S could go, though.

No, my excuse for taking the 1000F to Combe was borne of fear rather than frustration – odd really as it used to be fear that kept me away from race tracks.

Having always left the traction control on setting '3' (or in my head 'all of it'), I was surprised to find that on a dry road the TC light blinks frantically with the merest of accelerations while turning, typically coming off roundabouts. Having popped into JHS Racing for a static suspension set-up I was confident the Suzuki would now be adept at handling Combe's remaining lumps and bumps, and being wary of playing with this on the road, a damp 1.8 mile lap sounded ideal. The friendly team there makes novices like me very welcome, providing lots of help and assurance so my usual track nerves were absent – a first!

So how confused was I to find that on a surface akin to a wet filling-station forecourt in winter, I was now utterly




Price from new:

£9,999

Insurance group: 15

unable to get the TC light to even flicker? The feeling from the front on turning in was one of maximum caution required, yet gassing out of turns whilst almost upright was grip-n-go every time. I just couldn't make myself grab a big enough handful – it turns out fear translates to frustration after all!

On a much drier track, in the next session, the eggshells had gone and I could actually ride the bike, the extra lean round the open turns like Hammerdown getting the TC light blinking like a good 'un. The JHS-set suspension was keeping the GSX's mass well under control, and what was getting the TC to kick in was always adding lean while on the power – rather than adding power while turning – and in the afternoon I could just about get the light to flicker on setting '2' in the same way. But I'll have to wait for Castle Combe to restart trackdays next April to play with it some more, then maybe I'll find it's my own internal TC that needs some recalibrating and I'll actually be able to use full throttle without fear. 



Jonny's static set-up deets...

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Never mind that, did you sell any ads?



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CHARLIE TRIUMPH DAYTONA 675

TIME ON TEST:
6 MONTHS

03920 ODOMETER
MILES

BHP: 110
GAIN: NA

NEXT AIM:
KEEP HOLD OF IT

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Riding not modding..."

Seeing Rootsy depart on his great European Cannonball adventure spurred me into some extended miles of my own this month. With meetings long overdue in the frozen North I packed up the 675 for an 800 mile round trip that took me deep into the Lake District, having first directed my journey through the Welsh countryside.

Most 'sales reps' would sit in the comfort of their company Mondeo, jacket hanging in the back and a constant cup of luke warm Costa coffee to keep them company. My role at Fast Bikes does not operate like that. If you work in bikes then you ride bikes – and though you run the risk of turning up to a meeting soaked through to the skin or sweating like a South African rugby referee at a Burns Night Supper, you travel by bike. End of.

With the range of metal available at FB towers, travelling any other way would be criminal. Although the bigger bikes and engines of the S 1000 RR and ZX-10R were available, I could not look past the 675 for this particular journey.

With a fresh set of Metzeler M7 RR's to scrub in I had almost hoped for three days of seasonal changes to match the vastly contrasting roads I would be experiencing on my round trip. The motorway miles would be a good start to test the longevity boasts Metzeler make, the phenomenal twists and turns through Cumbria and a return trip via the Yorkshire Dales would test the sporty handling. All I needed was all weather conditions to have the overall M7 experience. Unbelievably, although what is actually becoming more the norm for October, the sun did not stop shining. The wet test had to wait until later in the month on the mud splattered

country roads I negotiate each morning on my way into work. And believe me not one of the Metzeler boasts are unfounded, these are a fantastically grippy pair of boots.

As much as this 'northern tour' was business orientated there was always going to be a lot of fun to be had in the bits inbetween. A potential problem I faced was the amount of gear I would need with me for two nights and six meetings. That's a lot of magazines, laptop, iPads, a camera, lenses, chargers and, er, pants. Though I could have spread the load with a tankbag, I wanted to avoid this and although Triumph produces a properly Gucci tail pack for the Trumpet the 10 litres offered would not fit the job. Thus I reverted back to my Kriega US-30 (£95). It's big (smaller are available), meaning it overhangs the slender tail of the Triumph impeding the tail brake light a little (though you can mount it sideways), but once strapped on you can forget about it and ride as if it isn't even there. Further to this, the trusty R-35 rucksack (£145), designed to disperse the weight carried through the chest as opposed to hanging off your back, completed the job and I was away.

The only thing that was impeding my frontal view was the sat nav that can cause mounting problems with supersport machines like the 675. Aerodynamic cockpits are small and when mounting you can continually catch the surround with your nav. Fortunately, a universal stem post available from Motohaus centralises the navigation unit and allows adjustment so the unit is out of your main line of sight, even when tucked in.

Having ticked all of the touring boxes I was away and the Triumph was a joy to



Price from new: £9,599
Insurance group: 15

Modifications	Price
Techspec Gripster snakeskin	£46.76
Sprint air filter	£81.00
R&G Eazi-Grip	£40.00

ride. The motorway miles that can be both mind and arse numbing passed swiftly as the triple engine holds an admirable pace almost ticking over; and there's plenty left for swift passing and excitable bursts as roads clear in front.

Where the fun really started, of course, was on the A and B roads where the turn of pace of the bike and the beautifully kept, undulating, twisty and on the whole quiet strips of Tarmac had me buzzing mile after mile. Each roundabout helped scrub off the chicken strips on the M7s and with every flick of the bike confidence just continued to grow until I reached each destination totally exhilarated. This is a feeling I have to admit I get pretty much every time I get off of the Triumph.

There's more to be done though and, as I have promised before, I need to get the bike up to Triumph for a new pipe and potentially some rearsets. The problem I have though is they may want it back if I remind them about it. I don't think I'm ready to let this masterpiece go as yet; I'm hoping they forget I have it!

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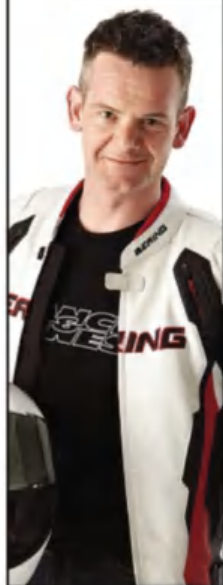
03740

ODOMETER
MILES

BHP: N/A
GAIN: N/A

NEXT AIM:
PIPE AND DYNO

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Slinging on some of the good stuff..."



So the news has broken. An all new ZX-10R is heading this way and will certainly be one of the key highlights at Motorcycle Live at the end of the month. Whether it will create the stir, or indeed the noise, that the H2R managed on the dyno last year remains to be seen (or, rather, heard), but when Kawasaki say new it means it. New frame, new swingarm, new engine, new electronics. This all leads towards what will only be a missile that will certainly need the stopping power of the Brembo M50 calipers to haul it up. Oh, and yes there is a quickshifter too!

So where does that leave the current model? I guess it's dependent on how many are left to sell in the UK and what dealers are willing to do to make space for the new incarnation of the Ninja. I would be very surprised if a few taster deals did not start to appear, whether that's financially incentivised or via accessories. Either way, you will still be purchasing an exceptional machine with massive capability. It's as aggressive on the throttle as it is in looks and as the basis for the last couple of championships in WSB it's already a brilliant package given the price tag.

So far under my wing the Ten has been treated to the most advanced race shifter I could get my hands on via HM. This month I have followed suit with even more premium parts that I didn't really know I needed until I put them on. Having visited Reactive Parts, business owner and road racer Steve Heneghan got to work fitting parts that he also supplies to the likes of Quattro Plant Kawasaki in BSB and on the roads for James Hillier and Ian Hutchinson. Before I left I had a new set of levers and a set of the most beautiful LightTech rearsets I

have ever had under my boots.

In a word the LightTech rearsets are 'solid'. There's no flex in them at all which I hadn't really noticed I had in the OE fitment until I rode with these. The key to the LightTechs is that they are crafted from once piece of billet; the more pieces the more joins, thus the more potential for flex. They are fully adjustable, of course, but designed and machined with strength in mind and are impossible to bend. Therefore the level of feedback you get from each shift is remarkable and feeling the weight that you're putting through the pegs enhances not only the ride but also your level of control. On top of all of this, if you needed any more reason, is that they are stunning to look at and set off the bike perfectly, especially with the optional carbon fibre heel plates that come in at a not unreasonable £37.99.

In addition to the rearsets, the guys at Reactive also fitted LightTech brake and clutch levers, again beautifully crafted with interchangeable inserts (£4 each) that colour match your bike and aid the feel from the levers in all weathers. The brake has an adjuster that can easily be used on the move which has been designed for racers and fast road riders fully in mind. That stretches to the fact that both the levers will fold up in the event of an off, which should save having to replace snapped controls.

Along with the LightTech additions this month, a full set of R&G 'Race Series' protection (including crank, clutch and generator covers, fork protectors and a tail tidy) is awaiting fitment. The crash protection fits easily with the need to only replace three or four bolts with slightly longer ones to hold the cases in place. The Race Series products have



Price from new: £12,199
Insurance group: 17

Modifications:

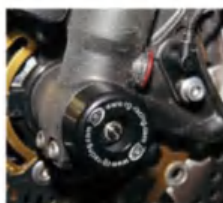
LightTech rearsets	£369.99
LightTech levers	£163.50
R&G generator case	£65.99
R&G clutch case cover	£72.99
R&G starter motor case	£51.99
R&G fork protectors	£30.99
R&G tail tidy	£89.99
TOTAL	£845.44

been designed in collaboration with a number of BSB race teams, exceeding all required standards so you can rest assured of their exceptional protection if needed. The same goes for the fork protection, which again is simple to fit and extremely effective in an off.

Finally came the arrival of a fast new addition this month from Performance Parts. An Akrapovic end can and link pipe that replaces the collector box. This will be on for next month and should see some significant gains on the dyno and improve the Kawasaki's soundtrack no end. Until then I'll be getting as many miles in as I can as I'm sure with all of the mods already completed, and those that will follow, that rank will soon be pulled and chaps will be playing with the big Ten.

Thanks to:

Steve and Chris at Reactive Parts (www.reactiveparts.com), R&G Racing (www.rg-racing.com) and Performance Parts (www.performanceparts-ltd.com)



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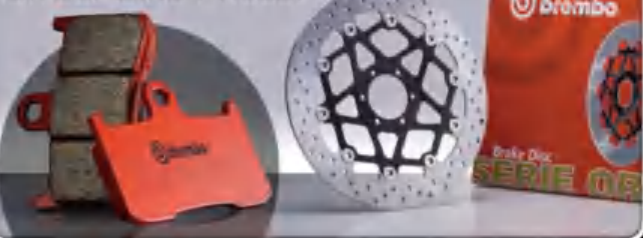
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DANIEL DUCATI SCRAMBLER

TIME ON TEST:
4 MONTHS

01087 ODOMETER
MILES

BHP: N/A
GAIN: N/A

NEXT AIM:
MAN THE F UP!

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Getting some green lane action in before winter."

At the beginning of the month I finally got round to the first service. I got it booked in at my nearest dealership, Cornerspeed Ducati in Sutton-in-Ashfield. It's only a small spot run by a chap called Neil, but the garage is like a goldmine of Ducati memorabilia and it's regularly chock-full of bikes. They are busy all the time – and I could tell why. Neil cares about the work he does, he made sure everything was perfect before handing me back the key – he even gave it a proper clean and she came back looking brand spankers!

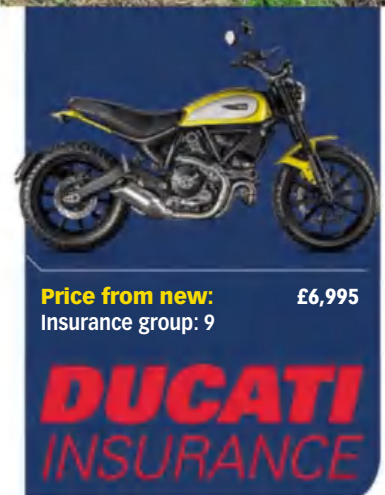
He has formerly local customers who have now moved abroad (as far as Dubai), yet they still bring their bikes over for work by Cornerspeed – now that's got to say something about the work they do. I'd recommend their services to anybody, they even have a dyno room and will do power runs on any bike, Ducati or not. Top notch.

I haven't really touched on flaws with the Scrambler, but that's honestly because I don't have much to say here. I'd been having a bit of trouble with the gearbox when downshifting during the run-in period, where it would sometimes jump out of gear unless you were very firm with the selection. This had gone as the gearbox settled in and was treated to a fresh slug of oil at the service. Other

than that, I haven't been able to fault it mechanically. In fact, I was talking to a Diavel owner outside of Cornerspeed who was looking to get a Scrambler – I couldn't recommend it enough and he was certain he was having an urban enduro model after seeing one in person.

However, if I could change anything at all, I'd stick a bash plate on the undercarriage. If you look at where the oil filter is located, it can get precariously close to a clout off-road. Not a problem on blacktop, and that's probably why Ducati designed it there. It doesn't detract anything from the original Scrambler and it's a two-minute job to whip off and change. If you get a Scrambler and decide to do some mild hooning, bear it in mind – try and stick to flat track lanes if possible; if you crack it hard enough it could quite easily leave you high and dry, literally.

So if you were following the launch of the Scrambler at the beginning of the year you will know that they released a clothing line alongside the bike. Thankfully it's not just a load of t-shirts. Ducati do items for both on and off the bike from keyrings, hats, boots and rucksacks; the only thing it doesn't have is a Ducati kitchen sink (yet...). I was fortunate enough that Keeley from Ducati UK's apparel department very



Price from new: £6,995
Insurance group: 9

DUCATI
INSURANCE

generously sent me some Scrambler items to try out. I received the snazzy Outdoor Fabric jacket. Made in Italy by Spidi, it's the full beans and not just made to look cool (although it does). There's CE rated shoulder and elbow armour and takes a back protector too. It has a removable camo quilted jacket built in, which I'm grateful for now it's getting cooler, as it's super warm inside. Even better, it's thin enough to whip out and roll up into my rucksack when getting a bit hot off the bike. Perfect for the job. She's promised me some gloves too (legend!) so I'll let you guys know how I get on with those next month.

To check out the range of Scrambler items go to - <http://scramblerducati.com/>

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MADNESS: ONE STEP BEYOND...

Something that's been bubbling slowly in 2015, for longer than is generally known, finally boiled over during Sepang's controversial race, the penultimate round of one of the most intriguing MotoGP seasons for some time. This particular proverbial pot, of course, contained the nine times world champion Valentino Rossi, and heir apparent to his throne, Marc Marquez. Once, the pair had been friends, or at least what passed for friendship in the MotoGP bubble. The young Spaniard was a self-confessed fan of the legendary Italian, and he always looked

stoked to be racing alongside his hero from when he'd been an aspiring racer.

Rossi, coming off the back of two torrid seasons when his much vaunted Ducati move failed, was blown away by Marquez when he hit MotoGP running. The rookie won the title in his first season, and then backed it up with a crushing display of dominance the following year. The raw pace and talent he possesses, combined with Honda's seemingly flawless RCV, was assumed to be a partnership that would dominate for a long, long time.

Rossi himself heaped generous (yet subtly

reserved) praise upon Marquez on many occasions. How could he not when being continually asked about the young charger's quite apparent skill. On many occasions, though, he would describe Marquez's talent with the use of a gentle swear word or two, such as 'a little bastard' – although said through a smile. We all laughed, of course, Valentino being Valentino after all, a prankster himself and always quick with a media friendly quip bordering on the amusing side of acceptable. But there were times when there was a glimmer of his often backhanded



Rubbing, it seems, is no longer racing...

praise being offered through silent and gently grinding teeth – perhaps because he knew who and what exactly he was watching wow the crowds, while he could keep him in sight. This was him back in Y2k, essentially, and he was racing against the next superstar of the sport; the next Rossi, Doohan, Rainey, Lawson or Roberts. Yet if there was any hint of jealousy or sour grapes there was little evidence on the surface. He almost seemed happy to pass on the torch.

That all ended at the start of 2015. Rossi had done rather well in 2014, aided partly by capitalising on other close rivals' errors and poor luck. 2015's beginning was no different, but it was also clear early on that this would be Rossi's best chance of one more crown. Jorge Lorenzo was out of sorts, Dani Pedrosa

was missing through surgery and, most importantly, it was clear Honda had made a grievous error with this iteration of the RCV. In Argentina, the flame was lit under the pot when Rossi's swift change of direction caught Marquez out, and off he went. Marquez suspected a change of Rossi's usual line to blame, but things slowly heated up as Marc fought the recalcitrant Honda, winning one week, crashing the next, while Rossi marched on, picking up points everywhere.

At Assen, their relationship fundamentally changed for good. Marc's astonishing final lap to reel Rossi in, and ballsy pass, was all for naught as he watched the man he clipped sail across the chicane he continued to try and traverse, to take the win unpenalized. This was now the second time he'd discovered

what racing against a legend meant; he'd been taken to school twice in the space of just a few hundred yards.

Things appeared to generally improve afterwards until, many races later, that press conference at Sepang. Of course, we know what happened; Rossi accusing Marquez of helping Lorenzo in Oz, of never really being a fan of his, among other jibes. Un-Rossi like or not, and whatever his motivations, the battle lines were drawn and shortly after this image was taken the pair courted the controversy we're now familiar with. In some ways we may benefit, as there's been too much hugging between rivals in MotoGP for far too long. It needed a spark to end all that, and it's likely providence that it's Rossi who's delivered it. Who else but the Goat?

BSB: Brookes Nails It

At Brands Hatch Josh Brookes finally scored the BSB title he's coveted for years – and it was thoroughly deserved. Even a final race crash couldn't mar how he'd passed and broken outgoing champ' Shane Byrne to lift the trophy on Saturday's outing, a race that saw him ooze confidence as he breezed away to victory. It's been a long journey for Josh since joining our hallowed series, and few could have predicted that the guy who was once the paddock's favourite whipping boy, would be whipping ass in such convincing fashion over the establishment.

When he first joined, he couldn't do right by anyone it seemed. His unfortunate fall at Mallory Park, for example, where upon braking into the hairpin he hit a bump he had no idea was there and skittled a bunch of guys just in front of him. Few could forget the sight of (then) Suzuki manager Jack Valentine's animated fury on the pit wall when that happened, he looked as if the pizza delivery boy had stood him up.

There was also Donington, of course, another incident involving a hairpin where Josh appeared to ram Sylvain Guintoli at Melbourne, the Suzuki rider suffering a nasty leg break in the process. It didn't seem to matter that it had been proved that there was an issue with his brakes beyond his control, as long as he was getting a good kicking, the facts were simply ignored.



But it's amazing what a few wins and a couple of runs for the title can do for you – as well as a top TT outing. It's fair to say he's a popular guy these days, winners usually are. And he's finally got the right bike for him. With the greatest of respect to the TAS guys, the GSX-R in circuit trim has been off the pace for a while and harder to tweak to match the performance of the latest machinery, hence their move to BMW this year.

Josh made the Suzuki look much better than it was ultimately capable of performing, and on last year's Yamaha he came close on another bike nearing the end of its racing life. But once they got the new R1 on song, he just kept on winning. We may know by the time you read this where he's going next year, but it'll likely be WSB with his current team and maybe Karel Abraham alongside him. Congratulations though, top job!



Title winning wheelies are cool!

RACING LINES

Melandri Employed!

Well, does working for free make you actually employed? The ex-GP champion has joined the MV Agusta bunch as a test rider for the time being, to give the team a hand to try and carve some more performance out of the ageing F4 before the new bike hits the track. He also wants to use the opportunity to see if he's still got it in him, after his Aprilia GP nightmare. MV was at pains to point out this is testing only, so unless he's happy to stick doing that, he's still essentially out of a job.

Stapleford Goes Where?

New British supersport champion, Luke Stapleford, has had an amazing year, and crushed the opposition at Brands Hatch, while also trying his hand at BSB at the same time. The big question is where will he be going next year? Rumours say a world supersport seat perhaps, which would be just rewards. We wonder if he could herald the return of Triumph there? He'd have to buy a new version of the bike though, he won the BSS title on the old one! Skills!

Kent Makes Life Tough

At time of writing, and with just one race remaining, Danny Kent still hasn't wrapped up the Moto3 series. Another big crash in Oz didn't help, and the move he made around the outside of a rival, which sparked the off, seemed bonkers at the time. He then couldn't quite clinch it at Sepang, meaning he'll need two points to secure it in Spain. So then, reader, what happened, did he do it?

Daddy Dorna

Following the controversy at Sepang, the internet almost melted as gazillions of people wanted to have their say. Social media slowed to a crawl under the barrage, while folk like us tried desperately to keep up. Of course, there were multiple copies of clips doing the rounds, and Dorna then spent days searching far and wide to get them removed and thus protect their money-making visuals. Rather than embrace technology and everyone wanting to share things, the heavies were out trying to keep things in house.

BMW Shifts in WSB

The BMW Italia team that ran Ayrtton Badovini this year (and who let Rootsy have a go) is parting ways with the German manufacturer. Word on the racing street is that they're likely to pair up with the Althea squad, with Jordi Torres as one rider alongside one other, perhaps Niccolò Canepa. Canepa, meanwhile, still waits to find out what will happen to him regarding his antics at Mugello a while ago where he appeared to whack a brake lever, sending a rival flying. If he's to be on the naughty step, he'd want at least a semi-factory one.

Still No Aprilia

We thought we'd hear word by now whether or not Shaun Muir's team would be taking the Aprilia WSB gig, but on deadline there's still no clue. A crux could be the €2m asking price Aprilia wants for the bikes, as it appears to not be shifting one bit on the price tag. For a potentially title winning bike, that's not too bad, and it's always possible daddy Abraham could rustle up some wonga to get his boy Karel a seat, and secure the much vaunted RSV4.

WSB: Superbike Firsts

The final round of WSB Qatar, considering the title had already been decided in both main classes, was of the highest order. Great racing, hard scraps and a couple of firsts to boot. The opening race of WSB was interesting as Tom Sykes shot off, closely followed by Johnny Rea – who was chasing the WSB points record. As the pair dived and the laps ticked down, an Aprilia in the background was getting closer and closer. Jordi Torres had his tail up, and once past Sykes entered into an exciting final lap duel with Rea, getting the better of the new champ by the line. It was well deserved, 'Spanish Elvis' has been good value in his first WSB season and should be earmarked for a top seat in 2016. Rea, meanwhile, didn't get that points record as he had to retire with a mechanical issue in race two. Sandwiched by WSB was supersport, and a terrific fight between Kenan Sofuoglu, Kyle Smith and Lorenzo Zanetti. Smith came out on top at the end, taking his first world championship win and earning another ride for next year with the CIA Insurance Honda crowd. Zanetti was happy to have a poke at MV Agusta after securing third place in the series. By all accounts they weren't keen on keeping him, but his contract said third equals a factory seat for next year. We're not quite sure how laughing at your employers works, when you have to work for them again the following season. Ha, Italians!



Howay for this Jordi!

GOOD MONTH

Dani Pedrosa

Two wins out of three, score!

Josh Brookes

I am the champ' baby, yeah!

Chaz Davies

Secured second in WSB...

Jorge Lorenzo

Reeled Rossi back in the points.

The Racing Public

It's never been crazier, enjoy!

BAD MONTH

Valentino Rossi

The crown slipped a notch...

Danny Kent

Another big highside.

Shane Byrne

Already looking to 2016.

Jorge Lorenzo

Sepang tantrum not pretty.

Marc Marquez

The internet now hates him.



Our boy!

MOLE: POT, KETTLE, BLACK

Pit Shadow

■ Well, what on earth am I going to talk about this month? Hmm, there's only really one thing, isn't there – the elephants in the room right now, emblazoned with 46 and 93. I'm still agog at what transpired in Sepang, in fact the entire paddock is. At several points over the weekend there were times in the pressroom, and in garages and hospitality units, where things went a bit quiet as everyone tried to process exactly what had happened. I know I (among others) looked like I was catching flies on the Thursday, mouth open in amazement and eyes wide as we watched Rossi launch his scathing attack on Marc Marquez for allegedly helping out Lorenzo in Australia. As crazy as that may have sounded considering Marc won that race, beating Rossi's team-mate, it would only get worse. Rossi went on to question the validity of Marc's claims that he was a huge Rossi fan, and then pulled out time sheets from Phillip Island to try and prove his accusations were correct. It seemed petty, and desperate, although there were many rumours as to why he did this.

Firstly was that he just wanted Marquez to clear off and leave him and Lorenzo to duel it out. However, he knows that he's not quite as fast as Jorge, and word is that they tried to come up something, anything that could maybe help. He was trying to get Marquez to leave them alone, which was weird as this is racing, isn't it? At that time we heard not only had he sought Marc in PI to have a go at him, but he had also tracked down Dani Pedrosa at Aragon to demand why the little Spaniard had fought so hard with him on the last lap. Publicly, Rossi had made it appear that he enjoyed the fight and was pleased in some respects for Dani to come out on top. It appears that was a front, the worry was clearly creeping in. So, he'd had a go at both the Repsol guys, and at Sepang Marquez's mindset changed as he realised his once idol was trying to wind him up. It appeared to work, but not how Rossi intended it. Shortly after the conference, Marquez's mum posted pictures online of Marc's old bedroom – festooned with Rossi memorabilia. That made Vale look a little silly and desperate, but then in the race nobody showered themselves with glory. The fight between the pair was epic, neither clearly having the pace to stay with Pedrosa or Lorenzo, and with Marquez super pumped up by Rossi's vitriol it was always going to end in tears. What we didn't expect was for Rossi to lose it. The scrap they had was hard, but fair. Marc's moves to Rossi fans seemed harsh, but to non Rossi supporters they looked like fair game and Race Direction agreed. All Marc was doing was fighting back for his place in a race, just as Rossi does when someone goes past. In fact, everything Marc does, Rossi used to do himself. The difference is when the world's most popular rider does it, it's hailed as genius. Do it against him, and you get slaughtered. Rossi is now in the unique position of his former rivals, ruffled and annoyed with someone who has the measure of him. Whatever he was thinking on Thursday, it backfired on him, and has blotted his copybook. And I'm gutted that he let Marquez's bullish tactics get to him. It's such a shame and nobody wins out of this, not even us. The fallout will be long and drawn out, and I'm praying Valencia doesn't descend into farce, which it has every chance of doing after this.

WORDS: BENJAMIN J KUBAS CRONIN

PICS: WORLD GP LEGENDS, YAMAHA, MV AGUSTA AND DON MORLEY



WAYNE RAINEY

Delving a little deeper into our free gift this month, we look at 1990's 500 Grand Prix season with the man who won it, the legend that is Wayne Rainey...



Rainey leads Gardner, Doohan, et al, at Assen...

In 1990, we were right in the middle of what's considered MotoGP's 'golden era' of racing. This wonderful period ran from 1985 to 1995, and was populated by fantastic action, fierce rivalries, evil two-stroke machinery and brash, interesting and colourful characters. The most successful racer during that decade's worth of racing was arguably Wayne Rainey, three-times back to back 500cc champion, and on course for a fourth title until his desperately unfortunate

accident at Misano; an incident that we now know essentially signalled the end of not only Wayne's riding career, but of that incredible period too. Within two seasons all those legendary front runners bar Mick Doohan had retired from the sport, the rider landscape irrevocably changed and the 'golden era' became part of the annals of Grand Prix's glorious history.

Rainey came close to winning the 500cc title in 1989, only to be thwarted by a nasty

highside in Sweden allowing fellow legend Eddie Lawson to clinch his fourth and final championship. The following year, Lawson would line up alongside Wayne in the Team Roberts squad, freshly backed by Marlboro. It was to be Wayne's third year in the class, and the one where it was really time to shine. So that's why we're focussing on 1990, the first of Rainey's hat-trick of championships, and the first where he went into the new season knowing he had the skills and equipment to



do the job. Is that right, Wayne?

"Well, 1990 was a long time ago," said Rainey, "what, 25 years ago now? Wow! I was in a very good place in '90, even though I'd just lost the 1989 title to Eddie Lawson in only my second year in 500s. I was very motivated to carry on, and I knew they were courting Eddie to come to my team, and that we were going to change tyre brands, too. Add in the

Marlboro budget and I was in a good position to win it. I'm a guy that gets motivated easily, it doesn't take much. Say something negative and I get fired up. Or even say something nice and it has the same effect, there's no difference. But when Eddie was rumoured to be coming, I was really excited. Here was a guy who was four-time champion coming to my team, so let's see how it works out between us. This was someone I grew up with, we raced mini-bikes together, dirt-track together, so I thought I knew Eddie pretty good. When he went off to Europe, he figured out how to win championships and so I thought there was no better guy to have on your team than the man who could beat you. I really loved competition. I loved racing against the best possible team mates, so I was real fired up for the season ahead!"

Indeed, and straight onto two wins on the bounce. Not a bad start, we'd say.

"Actually, the year for me started on the first lap we began testing on. I made it a point for myself to prove that I was the number one rider on the team. I didn't have to adjust to the team, Eddie did, so I wanted to jump out of the box immediately. I tried to carry that on every single day, being fastest, and had a lot of confidence going into the first race. So at Suzuka it started in qualifying and in the last lap of the session we did a good time, I

remember it well, I think it was the first sub 2m10s lap there. It was fun, I was having a great time at that stage at the pinnacle of the sport, racing against the best, on bikes that weren't meant to be ridden the way we were riding them. It was a great time in my life, and during the race I had a great lead, then Eddie got taken out by Mick Doohan and he was lots of points down already. Then we went to mine and Eddie's home track, Laguna Seca, but Eddie had his brake pads fall out going into turn one in practice. You're never going to survive that there very well, he was lucky to get away with broken heels really. That meant Eddie was out, and the focus was on me to lead the team, but I was OK with that."

So, the switch to Michelins, was it such a huge difference from using the Dunlops?

"They were quite different. At that time the design philosophy at Dunlop was different to even a few years later, and Michelin had a different way of constructing the tyres. My first two years I was on Dunlops, against Michelin, so being able to race against them you could see the strong points. It was consistent over the race, it was very stable over distance. The Dunlop would start good, then suffer from the middle part of the race. Marlboro didn't want any tyre issues to affect results, they wanted us on the same as our rivals. I remember the first time I rode on



“I'M A GUY WHO GETS MOTIVATED REAL EASY, IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH, SO SAY SOMETHING NEGATIVE AND I'M FIRED UP!”



Super fast Spa in the wet – just a little bit scary...



The man was sheer class on a 500...

The greatest rivalry ever?

them I was amazed at being on record pace so easily. But I said I was still pushing the front, we had tried changing the bike as far as we could, but figured it was down to a lack of grip. My Michelin guy, Gerrard I think, said he'd go see what he could do. He made a call, and the next thing I knew they pulled a new tyre out of the truck, one we didn't even know existed before then, and I went half a second faster right away! I wasn't used to that kind of performance happening right away. But then there was always that 'Michelin flick' thing to worry about."

Ah! We were going to ask you about that, even to this day Michelin techs cringe when they hear that old term!

"Yeah, well part of the reason why their tyres worked so well was that they could also bite you. Part of riding these 500s is all about throttle control. When you're going through a corner on one without electronics, the only traction control you have is the seat of your pants or your throttle hand. So the suspension is loaded up, the tyres are loaded up, and the inherent torque curve of a two-stroke 500 is very short, but very explosive. You have to be kinda ahead of that, to anticipate what's going to happen as you apply the throttle through some corners. It seemed like flat or off-camber corners, with big torque increases, that's where the tyre would get loaded up and you

needed it to stick, but it's where it would step out so quick. If you didn't see that coming, it would bite you, and so many guys got bitten in that era. There are still guys limping today because of that! But that's what made them do good, why they won so many titles and was the tyre to be on at that time."

And you were one of few to win the title switching tyre brands?

"Michelin had built a tyre at that time which was the best. But in 1991 I stepped back on Dunlop and though they'd come a long way, they still had a different philosophy, although they were maybe a bit more rider friendly. There was a marked difference between the two tyres, but I was able to win on both, and won a lot of races on both, which probably came from my upbringing. My dad would always make me ride bikes that weren't so popular when I was a little guy racing. We would always try and take something like that and beat the guys on good bikes. I was used to that growing up, that kind of challenge, so I enjoyed trying to win on stuff nobody had before."

Speaking of beating people, Schwantz told us that in 1990 his DNF's were down to you. Chasing you, unwilling to accept you pulling away. Were you aware that he'd push so hard trying to beat you that he'd crash?

"No, that never entered my mind as I had

WAYNE GARDNER

The 1987 champ' speaks about his highlight of 1990



Without a doubt, Phillip Island was the highlight of the year. I'd broken my wrist the week before in Czechoslovakia and didn't even know if I was going to race, I planned to do a few laps for the fans then pull in because I didn't think I had any chance of winning it. But I still don't know quite what happened that day, because something came over me and I had one of those out of body experiences. I was trying to chase Mick Doohan down because I didn't want him to win as that event was on because of my career. So I was trying to put the pain from my wrist out of my mind, and I'd broken the fairing stay almost having a highside early on and the fairing was hanging off and dragging on the ground. I still have no idea how I went on to win the thing, but I did. I'd won the first time at Phillip Island the year before, but to win that one with everything going against me was an amazing experience. The action also made great TV, and we'll be trying to emulate that a bit with our World GP Legends series, make sure you come along in 2016!



Rainey at Spa. It's often rainy at Spa...



my hands full already, I was busy trying to stay on my bike! We all knew what those bikes were like back then, they were very unforgiving, they were beasts. Kevin rode with a very seat-of-the-pants style, and with a lot of emotion. It was exiting for a fan to watch, but I think I was a bit more calculated in my approach to racing and thought about things in a different way to him. Not that one is more successful than the other, but maybe Kevin didn't have as strong a team-mate back then to push development. I don't really know, but I had Kenny Roberts, Eddie and so on, and with me on the bike it was a strong combination. Kevin and my rivalry dated back from before Grand Prix and carried on into the class. Looking back it was an interesting time, more now to me looking back than it was back then as I had to beat him. But also Mick Doohan, Lawson, Gardner, later on Kocinski, all the best riders in the world back in the day."

Great names, and great, hard racers. Gardner was often one tough guy to beat from

the looks of things?

"Yeah he was, though Gardner to me was real scrappy. He'd wrestle the bike probably more than most, he was very physical. But sometimes he'd make what looked like a silly mistake and I'd wonder what he was thinking. I didn't always understand some of the moves he made, but unfortunately back then a lot of guys got hurt riding because of the inherent highsides built into the bikes' design for getting around tracks. He got hurt a lot riding those bikes, and trying to ride injured was a way of life back then. The guy that was least injured often had the best chance of winning!"

Wayne was injured at that race in Australia in 1990, that was some battle?

"Wayne was another rider who rode off a lot of emotion, if we'd of had fifteen GPs at Phillip Island he'd have been world champion in '90, but fortunately for everyone else it was just the once! It's interesting how some guys go really well at home but not elsewhere, and that year for whatever reasons it didn't go as

well for Wayne everywhere else. But man, that race at Phillip Island he rode one heck of a race. I think it was the last of the season, and sometimes when you know there's no races left after this one, you can get up and push harder for it. It was a great race, and on that day Wayne was the better rider."

Styles were so different back then too. We always wondered how Kevin would fare on a Yamaha, and Agostini did try and sign him for Yamaha for 1990 before Kenny poached Marlboro. But he seemed to have some great traits on that Suzuki?

"I don't know if it was the way Kevin set his bike up, or the dimensions of the Suzuki architecture, but it was always very stable on late braking corners. I was a part of a lot of the moves he put on me, so I knew where our weak points were! But I was able to ride around the outside of him on fast corners, that's where the Yamaha was good. If you look at the design of GP tracks back then, they were very fast with not much heavy braking. We tried lots of different techniques



REVVIN' KEVIN SCHWANTZ

The fans' favourite waxes lyrical about his year in 1990

1990 was the year before we had to use Dunlops, and the first with Lucky Strike, so it stands out a lot. It was a bit like every year; we were really good in some places, but when we weren't good we were really bad. You can't race Rainey and expect to fight for the title with him if you're not fighting for the podium every weekend. One of the things about the Suzuki was it had to be actually perfect to be competitive. Anything less than 99 per cent right in set-up and it wasn't a bike that could be right up the front. We did have a bunch of DNFs that year. The season before we had six DNFs, three were mechanical and three were me. In 1990 I can't remember any mechanicals, so they must have been all been

down to me! It was probably on a weekend where everything wasn't great and I was trying to make the most out of it. Wayne also got his stuff together that year, and I'm sure on each of those DNFs he was riding off into the sunset and I wasn't willing to accept it. I'm positive somehow I can credit him to why they were DNFs for sure! I always felt like I was a better racer trying to track someone down in front rather than trying to win with a clear track, but I was still learning at that point. If we back up, my first proper race on a street bike was 1984 in a club race, then superbikes from 1985-87, doing three wildcard GPs for a couple of those. Then I went into Grand Prix full time after just five seasons road racing – and people would tell me I was making too many mistakes! I was thrown into the deep end in 1988

and told to do what I could, so I did. All I knew was that I wanted to win races, and it took me some time to learn how. It wasn't until late 1992 that I sat back and had a rethink about my approach to it. In 1990 I still wasn't anywhere near winning the title, I even crashed at Brno and they named the corner after me! But the best part that year was Le Mans. I qualified on the third row, and we used to call that the barbecue row – as in you should have stayed at home and had a fucking barbecue! Third row then and you were two seconds off the pace, but race day could always make a difference. I got a good start and a sniff at the front. Back then Le Mans was all hard braking, I was getting guys sometimes two at a time on the brakes and eventually went on to win in front of Rainey, which is why it sticks out.



'90 was Randy Mamola's last year in GP, though he came back in '92 for a spell...



Speed, hatred and big black lines - marvelous!



Like red rag to a bull!



Cagiva were still trying to get it right in '90

to improve our heavy braking to get it to settle in turns to counter him though. Every bike had strengths and weaknesses back then, it was up to the team to make it work with their guy. I often wonder how I would have done on a Honda, or Kevin on a Yamaha, or Mick on a Suzuki, but it never happened that way."

That was a great thing about that time though – the Honda was fast, Suzuki solid on brakes, and the Yamaha a great all-rounder, with much bigger degrees of separation than today's rival manufacturers?

"Yeah, if you look 25 years have gone on since 1990. The big change is electronics and going to four-strokes. Going from racing four-strokes at home to a GP two-stroke was hard, a huge and difficult adjustment. Go the other way, from a two to a four-stroke and it's relatively easy. It's got all these built-in rider aids just because of the architecture of the engine, a relatively flat torque curve, no big explosion in the middle of a turn and so it's very easy to know where you are and understand what the tyre is going to do. When you add horsepower to them, and electronic technology, I have to imagine those things are incredible beasts to ride these days when the riders have to rely on the electronics as they do. You can get lap times out of the bike artificially, essentially. And that seems to be all the way through the spectrum, from the start line to the TC, wheelie-control, corner-to-corner torque curves, it's just like, wow! I think it'd be cool to take it all off. The four-stroke should still be OK to ride and it may improve the show, too. But when you get these kinds of performances and lap times with these electronics, it's hard to go against that, and it's progress that all goes onto road bikes. And I agree progress is good, it's the age we live in. That said, in 1990 we were starting to play with things like that, engine mappings and retarding power by holding the power-valve open longer than usual in the low gears. It was rudimentary compared to now, but we were playing with that stuff, looking to calm things down to improve lap times. But now it has made bikes more


manageable, so someone with less talent is closer to the top guys, as artificially you can get there. However, the best guys will always be faster, no matter what the rules. But also we have less highsides in racing, and that's key. Mostly you see guys lose the front, but the big crashes happen with the highsides and that's how things have improved hugely. You have to make a huge mistake to have a big highside these days. But it does require you to pay attention too, it doesn't mean you can't crash. If you get lazy with it, it will still bite you hard."

Very true. So, then, apart from winning the title at Brno, what was your most memorable part of 1990?

"A couple of things stand out, though normally what stands out are the races I lost! What I really recall though was Suzuka. We always started the year there and it was the best place as that's where the manufacturers were and the track has a huge history to it. It was a hard place to get right, but when you did, it gave you a huge buzz riding a GP bike at the limit there. We were lucky to have that as the first race. All us riders stayed at the same hotel and you'd always hear what the others had been doing in lap times in the off-season, as back then we always tested alone. So we were never sure how good everyone was, what they were hiding or how good each bike was until we got on track there. So there we were, the off-season had been very short, we'd been testing all over the world, I had the champion as my team-mate, Marlboro as our new sponsor and was on Michelin tyres – talk about being fired up! I'm fired up right now just remembering that feeling! I was so fired up, I was so excited so to go out there and qualify on pole, which means everything we were doing in the off-season was correct, and to out-qualify everyone by almost a second, hell, I felt ten feet tall! And to then go and blitz them in the race? I remember thinking it was gonna be a great year! And one other thing, I remember racing in Hungary that year, and we had finished on the podium every race in '90 so far. I remember my Japanese Yamaha

engineer, who's one of the main guys right now in Yamaha's MotoGP team, and he let me try some new front brake calipers. I said wow, I really like these, I want to use them in the race. But he said no, we hadn't had enough time on them. I thought brakes were generally so good in those days, and they worked fine in practice and qualifying, they would be fine in the race. He pleaded with me not to use them, and I just said the season was over and if we can test them in a GP that's the best place to do it, so I overruled him. So in the race I was fighting with Doohan, and then he got away and then the brake lever started coming in, and soon I had no front brake and had to pull in the pits. I remember riding past the podium and looking at it, thinking I was an idiot, why did I do that, I could have finished on the podium! If I had just listened to him, I would have had a podium every race in 1990. When I got back to the garage he was in tears that it had happened, and in the end I was too!" he concluded.

Some fine words from one of the sports greatest icons, on his first championship winning season. Rainey's time was a special one, though his career forever highlighted with what could have been but for that fateful day at Misano in 1993.

However, just how many more titles he could have won, or how far he could have gone, is moot. It's enough that he was instrumental in giving us nearly six unbelievably entertaining seasons, and was one half of the sport's greatest ever rivalry in a period yet to be bested. Mr Rainey, Sir, we salute you, and thanks for memories! 

1990 FINAL STANDINGS: TOP FIVE

- Wayne Rainey – Yamaha – 7 Wins / 255 pts
- Kevin Schwantz – Suzuki – 5 Wins / 188 pts
- Mick Doohan – Honda – 1 Win / 179 pts
- Niall Mackenzie – Suzuki – 0 Wins / 140 pts
- Wayne Gardner – Honda – 2 Wins / 138 pts

Clive Padgett

Hello all! Well, our racing year is pretty much done and in an hour's time we're off on holiday to Thailand for a well deserved break – so thought I'd better get this done now. Me and Neil Tuxworth went there years ago when I was just a man of 20, before we went off to New Zealand to a race, and I haven't been back since. It'll be mega I'm sure, that's what she's got planned. You know us men, we just do as we're told!

Overall it's been a fantastic season, I'd say. Bruce Anstey has been the only superbike rider to be on the podium at the North West 200, TT and the Ulster, winning a few races along the way and also setting new race records too. We also had podiums on the 600s, lots of fun and also set a 126mph lap on the YZR500 at the Classic TT. I did see Bruce had said he's had the most enjoyable year of racing ever, and I think that really says something about our season. It's been incredible.

Are we looking forward to next year with Bruce? Of course, that's already done and dusted. It was all sorted after one of our ice-cream meetings. Then there's Dan Kneen who's also had a great year, he's achieved everything we'd hoped for. He has gone quicker at every circuit, be it a BSB track, Darley Moor, the TT, wherever. That's a real accolade for both him and the team. We haven't done a deal with him yet, but is he in the running? Of course he is! It would be great to give him a second year to build on this first one. He's essentially an apprentice in many ways, but with a great profile, and 20 years younger than Bruce! All I can say for the moment is watch this space.

We're always working though. Already we've got a new exhaust pipe design with Arrow for the superbike. We went down to Italy with the bike to Arrow to get the



system built. We also flew a bike out to Valvoline in America to sit in their foyer. It never stops behind the scenes, and our bikes are constantly evolving. Riders love their old bikes like a comfy pair of slippers. Like I said earlier in the year, we rolled Bruce's bike from last season out of the van and he didn't change a single clicker, nothing. I asked him if he'd like a new bike for this year, but he said no, he wanted to ride his old one, which is kind of the answer I was hoping for, and so we'll keep evolving his bike for next season too.

The Fast Bikes guys have asked me whether or not I'd be tempted to buy one of those new Suter 500s, seeing as they know my love for all things two-stroke. I think it looks an awesome piece of kit, but would we have a purpose for it? No, we don't, mostly because we can't race it anywhere in what we do. It's a shame though as it looks stunning, a superb piece of equipment and it's nice for people to be able to buy a modern two-stroke beast!

We have also won some industry awards this year, which is great for us as we must never forget that we are a dealership. Well, three dealerships on the same road. But it's nice to be recognised and without people like you reading this right now, we wouldn't be able to run a business – nor go racing – so thank you! The kettle is always ready for you. I had some guy in the other day who bought a Norton off my dad, and has just bought another bike from us decades later! We had another bloke drive hundreds of miles to come pick a bike up he could have bought from a dealer around the corner from him. We're a bit of a destination. You'll see Bruce's, Hutchy's and McGuinness' TT bikes, old two-stroke race bikes as well as all our modern road bikes and kit, plus we'll make you a brew too! Please come say Hi at shows like the NEC, and we'll be taking the YZR500 to ride at the Billy Nutt Irish show in early Feb if you want to hear her zing!

This is also the time to thank everyone; the riders, the team, the family, our sponsors and Dunlop among many, many others for all their support. Without them we couldn't do a fraction of what we've achieved. And we'll be back for next year too, to go racing, to try and take some wins, but most of all to have some fun. Without that, what's the point? See you next year!





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Gary Johnson

Frohburg in Germany is a proper mint track. It's not too different to the North West 200, being triangular shaped and bloody fast! But instead of hedges, the course is lined with a metre-plus drop on each side of the circuit. Not the kind of thing you want to think about when you're absolutely pinned on a superbike, but thankfully I didn't go ditch finding on my new Team Penz13.com BMW S 1000 RR.

The reason for going out to the German circuit had been to get to know the team and bike ahead of this year's Macau GP. My mate Michael Rutter has been riding for the guys this season and he kept banging on about how good a bunch they all were. I don't believe much of what he says, but it turns out he was telling it straight. What a mega group of lads they are!

They're all German and, paired with Lee Johnston and Rutter, we gave them a right load of stick on every opportunity. As long as you didn't mention the war, they never stopped smiling! I think we got away with it...

The bike was equally mega. I'd never ridden the new Beemer before now. Needless to say, it didn't disappoint. The Penz boys have made that bike even more of a rocketship, and it handles really well, too. A bit too well for Lee and Michael, whom I handed it to in the first of the event's superbike races; taking a spot on the podium. I let them both beat me in the next outing just so they didn't go home crying...

It was an awesome time out there and it's got me proper pumped for Macau, which will be happening around about the time you read this column. I'm pretty confident it will go well. I like the place and I know I've got a mint machine beneath me. That's enough for me.

Before that gig I've got another classic endurance round to tick off. Me and teammate Nick Edgeley are off to Aragon in Spain for a four-hour meeting on the Team Monex GSX1100. I love that bike and it's got a whole lot better since its last outing at Spa. John Trigger's been tuning away at the motor and the chassis has been pimped up, too. It was already awesome before it got fiddled with, so who knows how good it's going to be now?

It's quite surprising just how fast those old bikes will go, especially when in the hands of someone with a bit of talent – I'll let you know if I see anyone with some on one! There are quite a few top boys who get involved, which cranks the pace up ridiculously. I'm hoping we'll do alright, though. Nick's a top teammate and I always do my best. Getting on the podium would be great, but having a trouble free and enjoyable ride is what it's all about. Racing's got to be fun, else it's too much like work, and that's not my bag...



More mint than Alan Minter eating some Extra Strong Mints



Trying not to mention the war...

Picture credit: Sébastien Sahet, pix4racer

Two Siblings Racing



With a clean sweep up for grabs, the FB boys had it all to play for at the season's last round...

WORDS: DANGEROUS BRUCE
PICS: ALEX JAMES PHOTOGRAPHY

After our eighth win from eight races surely something had to go wrong at the last round at Donington Park? As ever, we didn't help ourselves by rocking up last minute with a bike in bits. We took the unwanted accolade of being the last bike through scrutineering, an hour before Brod's qualifying for the Newcomers 600 race...

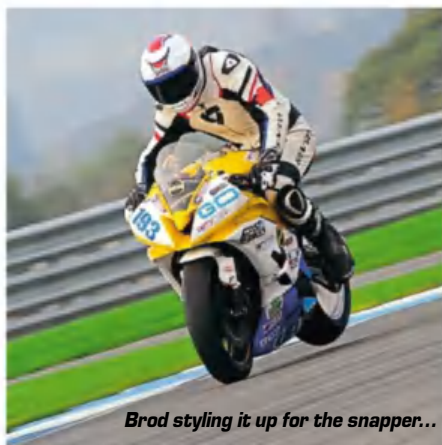
I went out first in the endurance qualifying and the weather was mint, considering the fact it was mid-October. But the track was still cold and a few riders were unfortunate to go out and lob it down the track. With not even a lap under our belts the session was red flagged and, after a 10 minute wait, we only managed another lap before the red lights

were flashing again. Third time out, I was amazed to see a rider wash out his front through Craner on the out lap. There must have been something in the air...

Rammed as ever, the popular endurance class had brought out a few of BSB's elite, including the likes of Dean Ellison, Hudson Kenneough and Joe Burns. For good measure, James McBride was also on the grid, along with superstock 600's Matt and Harry Truelove. Those boys are quick and though we managed to beat them at the Cadwell Park round, they were lapping two seconds quicker than us and looked likely to rain on our parade.

I gave Brod the choice of starting first in the endurance race, but he just started crying. I

took that as my cue to line up on the grid. As it happened, I got my worst start of the year, being baulked and only managing to maintain our seventh place grid position on the first lap. I was away with the leading pack, albeit being held up once more by the thousands. It was so frustrating, made worse by the arrival of a safety car. Having paraded around for three laps, I was inevitably blitzed by the bigger boys when the race went live again. Within that first hour I passed the same thousands a ridiculous amount of times, every lap being passed back on the straights and held up in the corners. On a more positive



Brod styling it up for the snapper...



End of season newcomers shenanigans...

THE ESSENTIAL LINKS: TALKING CHAINS

A chat with Mark Fenwick from B&C Express gave an insight into what chain to buy – and how to make them last when you're busy going fast...

Choosing the right chain for your bike is a specific process. You should always factor in your bike's horsepower and the intentions you have for it; a race bike will usually put a chain under more pressure than a road bike. Typically, the more you spend, the better the chain. It's a false economy fitting a cheap chain given the punishment they endure on a motorcycle. Most OEM manufacturers all specify O-ring chain so that has become the norm for today's modern motorcycle, but there are many other types of sealed or unsealed chains available. Racers tend to opt for

520 pitch chains, for the simple reason that it reduces the weight of the product when compared to a 530 pitch, for example. The three things necessary to increase the life of a chain are smooth and controlled acceleration and deceleration, cleaning, lubrication and adjustment and alignment of the chain. A sealed chain needs changing once it has stretched by more than one per cent of its original length (three per cent if it is a non-sealed chain). A chain's life cannot be gauged by mileage or time. And only use a quality name brand chain

Rivet-ing stuff...

lube specified for the type of chain being used. In recent times, we've seen increasing accounts of people using brake or carb cleaner on chains to clean them, which typically encourages seals to deteriorate or go baggy, so use a proper cleaner. Look after a chain and it will look after you.



About to be munched by a Beemer...

note, come the end of the first hour, consistent 1m 39s meant that I'd pulled a big gap over our pursuers, slotting in fourth overall behind Ellison, Kennaugh and Burns. Happy days. Better still, the Trueloves had dropped back to 19th place overall, being several laps behind us. It was game on.

After a quick pitstop Brod was straight into the swing of things, banging in fast laps and extending our lead. He's come on so much this year; it's hard to believe he's still a novice. His hour was pretty straight forward, although a few specs of rain did spice things up halfway through the stint. The third handover went simply enough and with a three lap lead over our pursuers, sitting in sixth overall, all I had to do was cruise around and maintain our position. But that's not always what happens in racing.


The thing was I had the bit between my teeth and had worked hard to catch a particular rider just before it was time for me to pit. I caught him on my last lap, passing him round the outside at Craner, ending up holding on for my life as the rear of the R6 came round beneath me. I thought I'd thrown it all away, but the bike came back in line and I managed to power off as though it had been a planned manoeuvre. I left a skid mark, but thankfully it washed out later...

Brod, being far more sensible, completed the last 30 minutes without any drama. Line crossed, we'd taken that eighth consecutive

win and it felt epic. Back in parc ferme, the bike's tyres were nearly down to canvas, the steel belt showing through the face of the Metzeler RRs. We like to get our money's worth in Lincolnshire...

Brod carried on racing the following day in the Newcomer 600 races. Having spent the night before sleeping on the floor, he was up and at it the next morning. Storming his way through the pack, setting fastest lap after fastest lap, to cross the line 0.174 seconds ahead of his nearest pursuer. It was an awesome win and his first of the year in the solo class and even better to note he'd banged in 1m 38s throughout the majority of the race.

Our whole team was buzzing and eager to see if he could clean up in the next two races. Sod's law, we didn't get chance to see his potential as some nobby on a suicide mission took Brod out at the Melbourne Loop in his next race, rendering the bike un-rideable. It was game over, but we had plenty of positives to focus on from both the weekend and the season. We never imagined to meet the people we have, to race with such a great club or to achieve what we ultimately have.

So while I'm hanging up my leathers (and this time I mean it), we're confident Brod's got a bright future ahead of him and we're trying to figure out the best path for him to pursue, so stay tuned. If you're interested in getting behind him, get in touch with the mag. We're desperate. No, we really are! 



It's not just the boys having fun on track...

ON THE GRID

Each month we shine the spotlight on a racer who's caught our attention.


Meet Jane Nixon...

Stepping up her game from doing the occasional trackday, the 36-year-old from Sherburn in Elmet decided to give endurance racing a go. "I'd always fancied racing, but didn't really know the best way to get into it," explained Jane. "I knew a group of ladies that did endurance racing and they encouraged me to partake in the Silverstone round of this season. It was my first ever meeting, competing on my Daytona 675, and I felt hooked come the end of it. I couldn't wait to race again."

Jane was unfortunate to crash out at the Cadwell Park round of the No Limits Racing endurance series and also had a rough time at the Anglesey meeting, but came back even more determined for Donington Park. "I wanted to stay on the bike and build up my confidence at Donington. Thankfully, things went to plan and I had another great race, competing in one of the three all-women Iron Maidens teams. It was great." The good news is Jane has already committed to doing the whole No Limits Racing endurance championship in 2016. Go, girl!



Winner, winner, chicken dinner!




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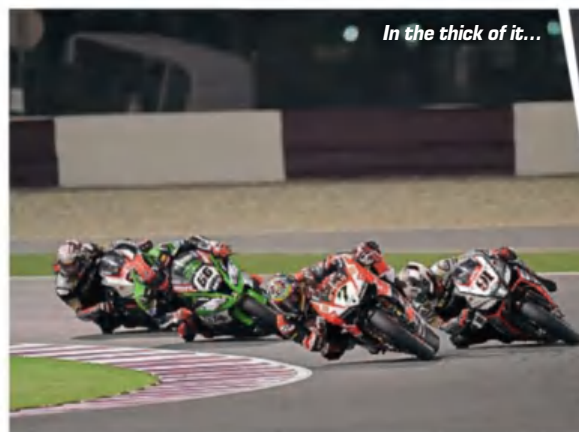
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Chaz Davies



Well, that's our season all done and dusted folks! The final two rounds were pretty eventful for all sorts of reasons, starting with Magny Cours. To be honest, it's always been a bit of a wank circuit for me. I don't think I've ever finished the first race there the entire time I've been in superbikes, which is a nice pattern to go into the weekend with, isn't it? I think my best result there is a fifth. Wow. But I knew on Saturday we had the pace to be up there, which was nice, but we weren't quite there to win. But on Sunday we had a little bit more pace in the dry after a bit more work. However, the first race was wet and a bit of a bloody disaster.

Our rear end was set up for the dry, and we were a bit indecisive in which way to go with the setting, and as the grid was shorter than usual we didn't have time to go back to a wet set-up. So the rear tyre pressure went through the roof and I was wondering what the point was as it got worse and worse. I was going backwards. As it started to dry out a bit it got better, and I started to reel the guys who had passed me back, but as a race it still sucked.

At least it was better than the wet race last year, what a fucking nightmare, that really was shit. However bad the grip was this year, it was 100 per cent better than last. But then Magny Cours in the wet has never been good for me, in Superpole I crashed when on course for pole and binned it in the last bit. It was my fault, I knew I was on the ragged edge, I only needed to make it a hundred more metres. But stupidly I had said to myself going in there 'don't cock it up!' and the next thing I knew I was on my arse. What a prat, I went in there like it was dry!

The second race was good though, my first podium there, but I was still having to be a bit conservative as I was pushing the front quite a lot, while well aware that as I'd lost a lot of points to Tom Sykes I needed to make sure I got some back. I'm not sure if I could have raced Johnny Rea with that in mind, but it was still a good result all things considered. I then wondered if Johnny would help Tom Sykes out to beat me to second in the series. Well, not Johnny so much, but from the team's perspective I was expecting something to happen. But it appeared not, thankfully, Johnny just did his thing as he was after the WSB points record. I just had to hope it would stay the same at Qatar, our finale.

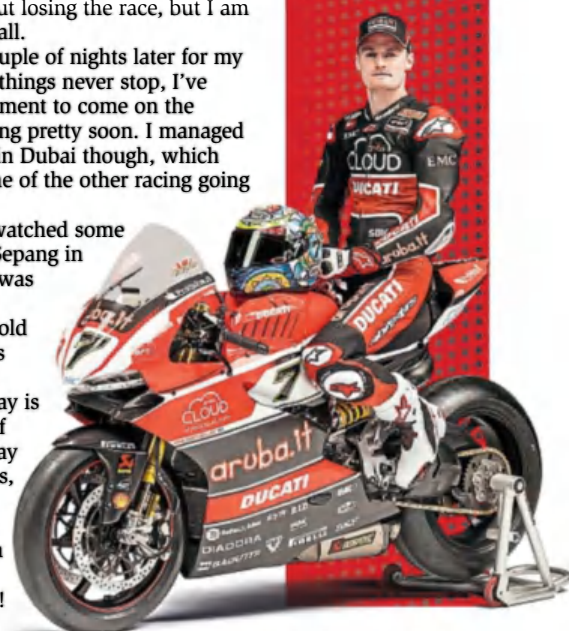
Now, I may have said top speed wouldn't be an issue at Qatar this year. Well, against the Kawasakis it wasn't too bad, but against those Aprilias it was hard work. I knew (well, have done all season) that we didn't have the top speed. But then if we'd have got the chassis right things

would have been better. I really struggled all weekend, I just didn't get the feeling I wanted and we had vibration issues for the first time, which was a shock. Well, more like chatter/vibration linked to engine braking, a bit of a mix. It was an issue in race one, but we managed to dumb it down a bit in the second. First time around it was hard to ride, plus our gear ratio there is on the limit in second and third; there's a big space and a huge compromise to get it short enough to keep third gear in play. I only ever felt like I was able to get 90 per cent from it – we even swapped around swingarms – but I didn't make the box and Tom beat me.

Anyway, we were great on the brakes so I was able to get past Leon Haslam time and again, and I knew I wanted to attack. I thought my pace would only last a couple of laps, but once the tyres dropped off it remained good. Leon got in front a few times, but I led for the majority. My main aim was to beat Tom and secure second, but I rode a really hard last lap to try and get some space, and went crazy deep into the last corner. The front was twitching like mad and I chastised myself to not cock it up and hand Tom second. Had I committed full-on, I could have chucked it all away, so had concede the win to Haslam. No, I'm not happy about losing the race, but I am pretty pleased with second overall.

We had our presentation a couple of nights later for my trophy, I even wore a shirt! But things never stop, I've been told there's lots of development to come on the Panigale and we're starting testing pretty soon. I managed to squeeze a couple of days off in Dubai though, which was fun, and catch up with some of the other racing going on elsewhere.

Speaking of which, I've just watched some crazy shenanigans going on in Sepang in MotoGP. That press conference was interesting, Rossi's point about Marquez holding him up may hold water, but it's hard to tell. It was weird, although I never noticed anything at the time. All I will say is when you're racing, you know if they're cocking about. If they stay off the throttle a couple of tenths, it makes you wonder what they're up to. Anyway, then the race happened. Well, wow... I'm not touching that this issue though, maybe in the next, ciao!



Steve Parrish



Hi folks, I'm still getting over the last weekend of racing we had that was bonkers, wasn't it? MotoGP from Phillip Island, BSB from Brands Hatch and WSB from Qatar all on the same day – phew!

I loved the racing from Brands. Josh Brookes and the Yamaha are in such a class on their own, he made Shane Byrne look a little silly at times on his way to the title – not that Shakey wasn't trying his nuts off, of course. I have got wind of a slight split between Yamaha and Shaun Muir's lot, which I've heard may be related to the TT/Michael Dunlop debacle. That being said, it's as likely they'll still be running Yamahas in WSB next year as perhaps Aprilias. That's yet to be confirmed, and the landscape in WSB next year is still in flux, who will run the Suzuki, for example? I'd love Francis Batta's Alstare lot to do it, as they'll do it properly. Leon Haslam is looking for a job and he gets on well with both Suzuki and the Battas. I wouldn't have Randy de Puniet on it though, even if he decided to wake up at Qatar for the first time this year. He probably realised his phone hasn't been ringing... Both de Puniet and Marco Melandri need to put out to pasture, although we know Melandri will be testing the MV so could end up there. Who knows? Or cares...

I thought it was lovely to see Jordi Torres win his first race, and Leon Haslam winning again too. A great way for Aprilia to end the year, although I'm sure someone will be running the bikes in 2016 as they will be full factory. Aprilia just wants someone to pay for it as they're pouring all their budget into MotoGP. So that could be Shaun Muir, maybe with Karel Abraham alongside Josh Brookes. There'll be no surprise that that would be smoothed along by a massive suitcase of money, but this kind of thing has been happening in racing for years and won't stop. So long as Brookes is up front, that'll be fine.

It was an amazing race between Leon and Chaz Davies, but with the speed of that Aprilia Chaz was always going to struggle beating him to the line, and in the end he cocked up slightly but I think Chaz will be one of the men to beat next year, no doubt.

Now, I'm writing this on a Friday and we've just had the first practice sessions at Sepang, but all the talk is about that press conference when Rossi appeared to have had a crack at Marc Marquez. Quite frankly, it's been less than 24-hours and I've had enough of it, everyone analysing Marc's lap times and so on. Rossi has done it before, and Barry Sheene used to do it decades ago. He's just trying to get everyone to hate Marquez and get them on his side. He's essentially saying Marquez is a horrible little bastard for holding up the great Rossi, even though he went on to win. I think Rossi is trying to be smart, but whether Marquez did or didn't it was still a great race, so who cares? It's all about getting others mixed in the title race. You can see Rossi is looking for a bit of sympathy, but I truly think this will bounce off Marquez and if I was Marc I'd do my utmost to screw him up from now on. Whereas if he hadn't said anything I'd just get on with trying to win races, which is what Rossi ultimately needs.

If Marquez truly wanted to help Lorenzo, he wouldn't have won the race, simple as that. So all it boils down to is just Rossi being Rossi; trying to do the same thing as he did with Biaggi and Gibernau. Basically, a mountain is being made out of a molehill!

Now then, I hear Rootsy is going to Macau, I think he even offered to give the chief of police my regards! It's funny, Paul Butler runs the race now but he actually went to prison with me! It went from being Portuguese owned to Chinese owned, so they eventually let me back. I'd love to give Rootsy my Mini Moke to get about, as I own one out there. I hired it out when it had all gone wrong, they impounded it for forensics (after that firework-brothel incident – Ed) and I ended up having to buy it. So he's welcome to it if he can find it, or if it's still there – it'll be covered in rust with my name on it! I do hope he'll be taking his wellies and a plank for his arse out there, too!

Anyway, I'm off to mark my Chrimbo cards with my new comedy stamp, and do some work to my FZ so it's ready for the NEC. Are you coming? It's going to be ace, see you there!



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proper drink!



Wallace not pictured...



Stavros getting ready
for Christmas japes...



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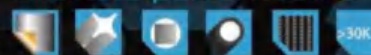
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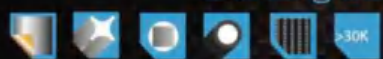
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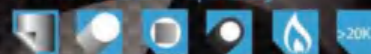
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